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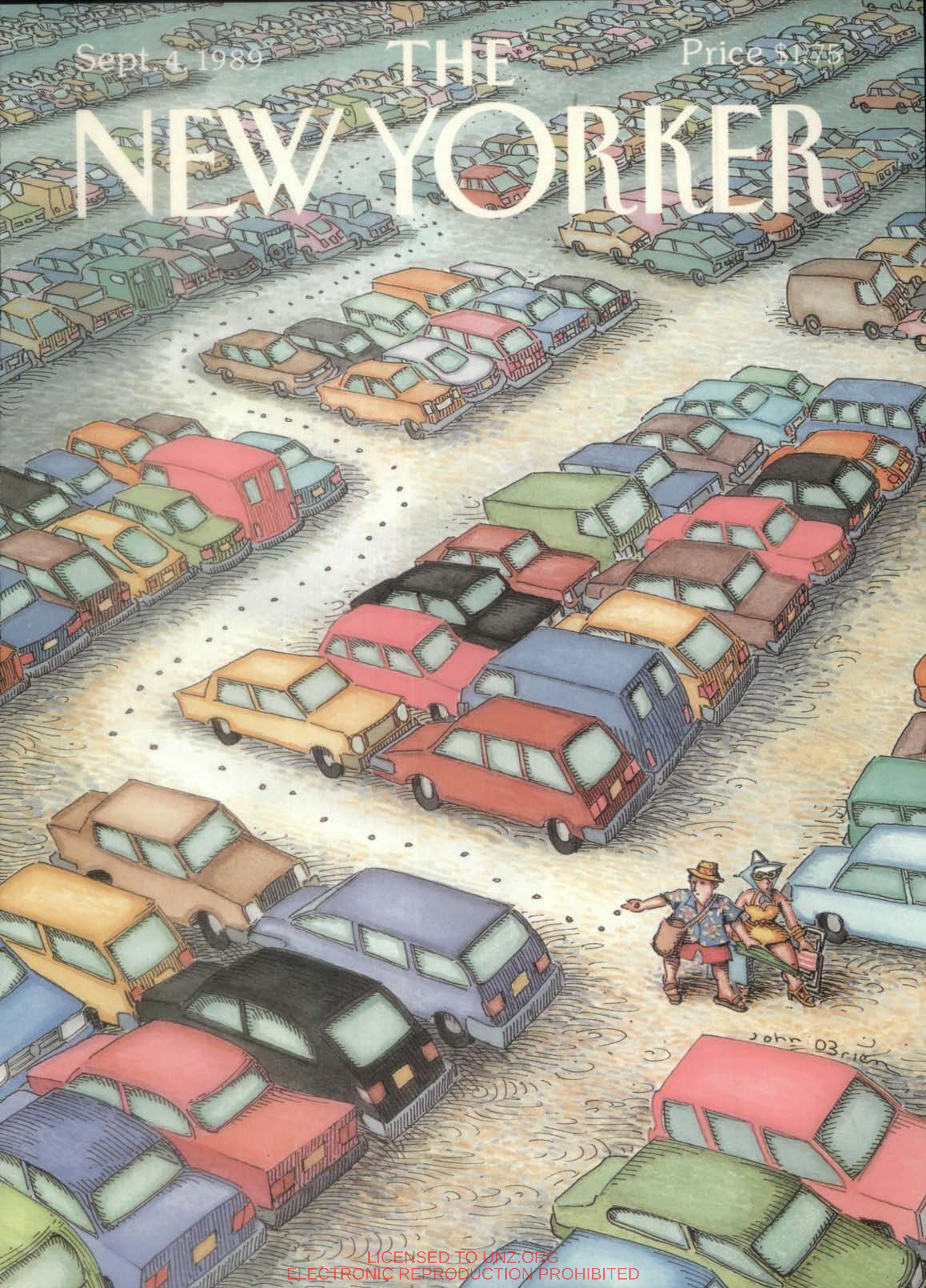

John O'Brien

M. DOLACK
1986

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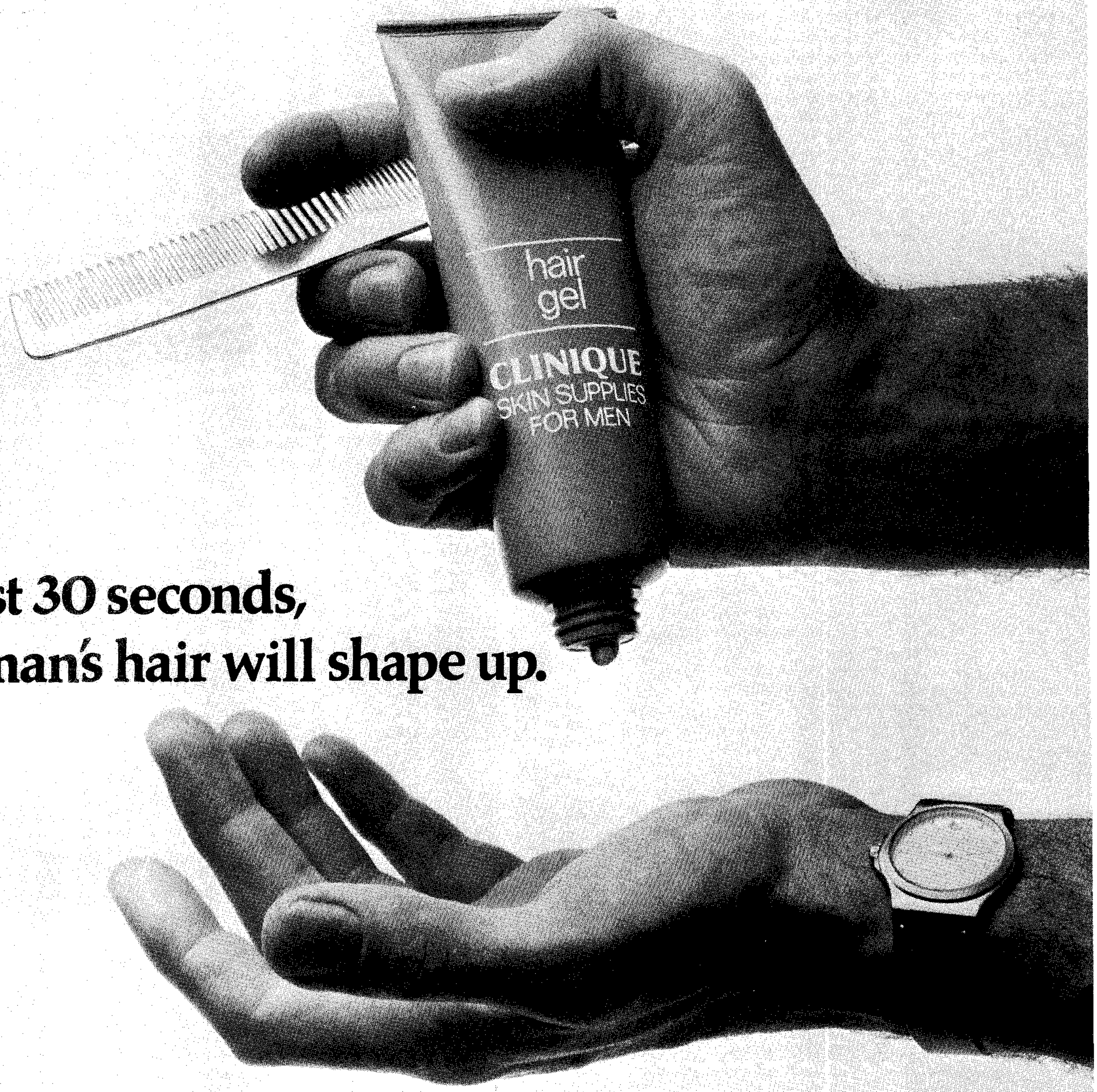

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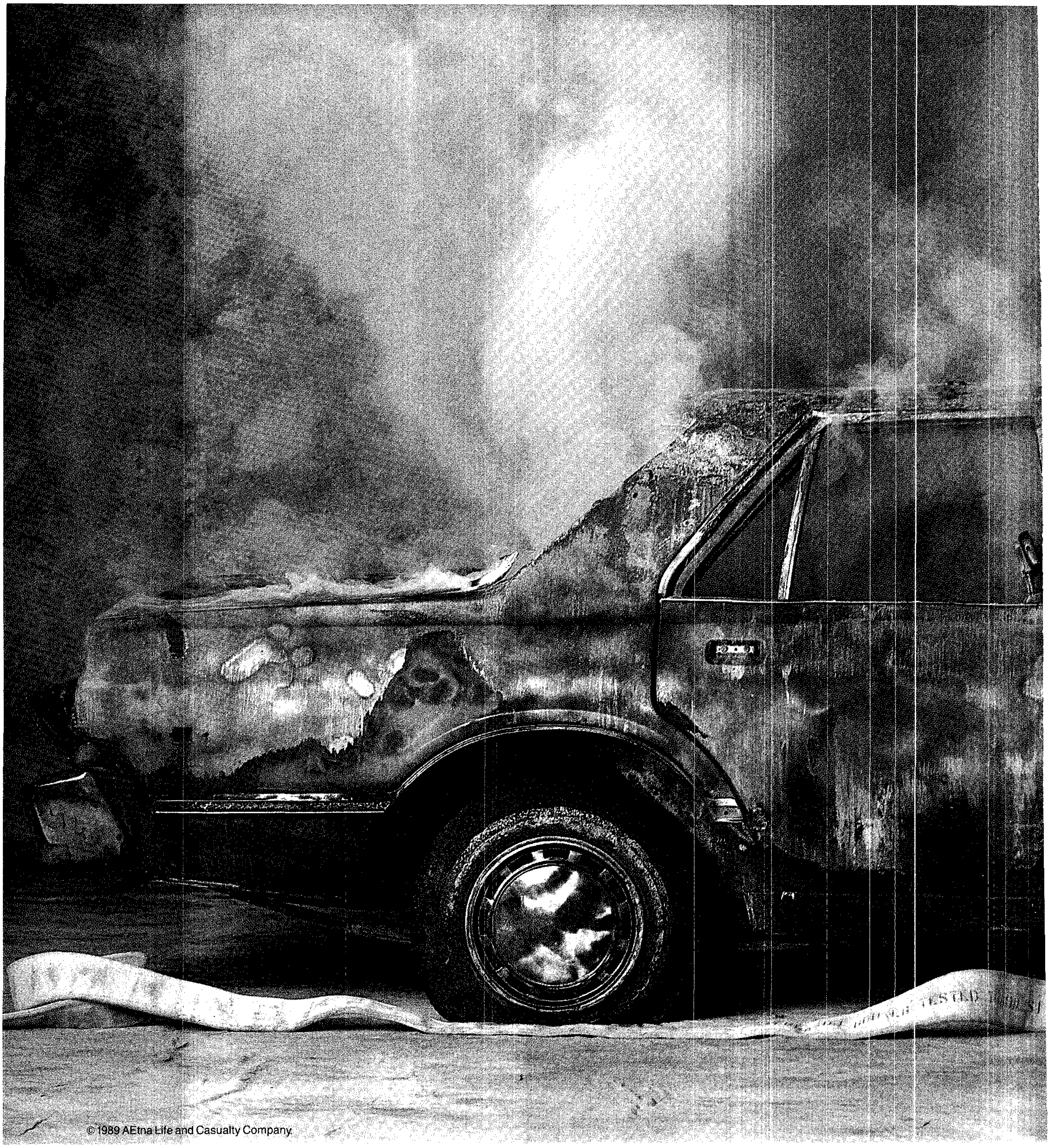

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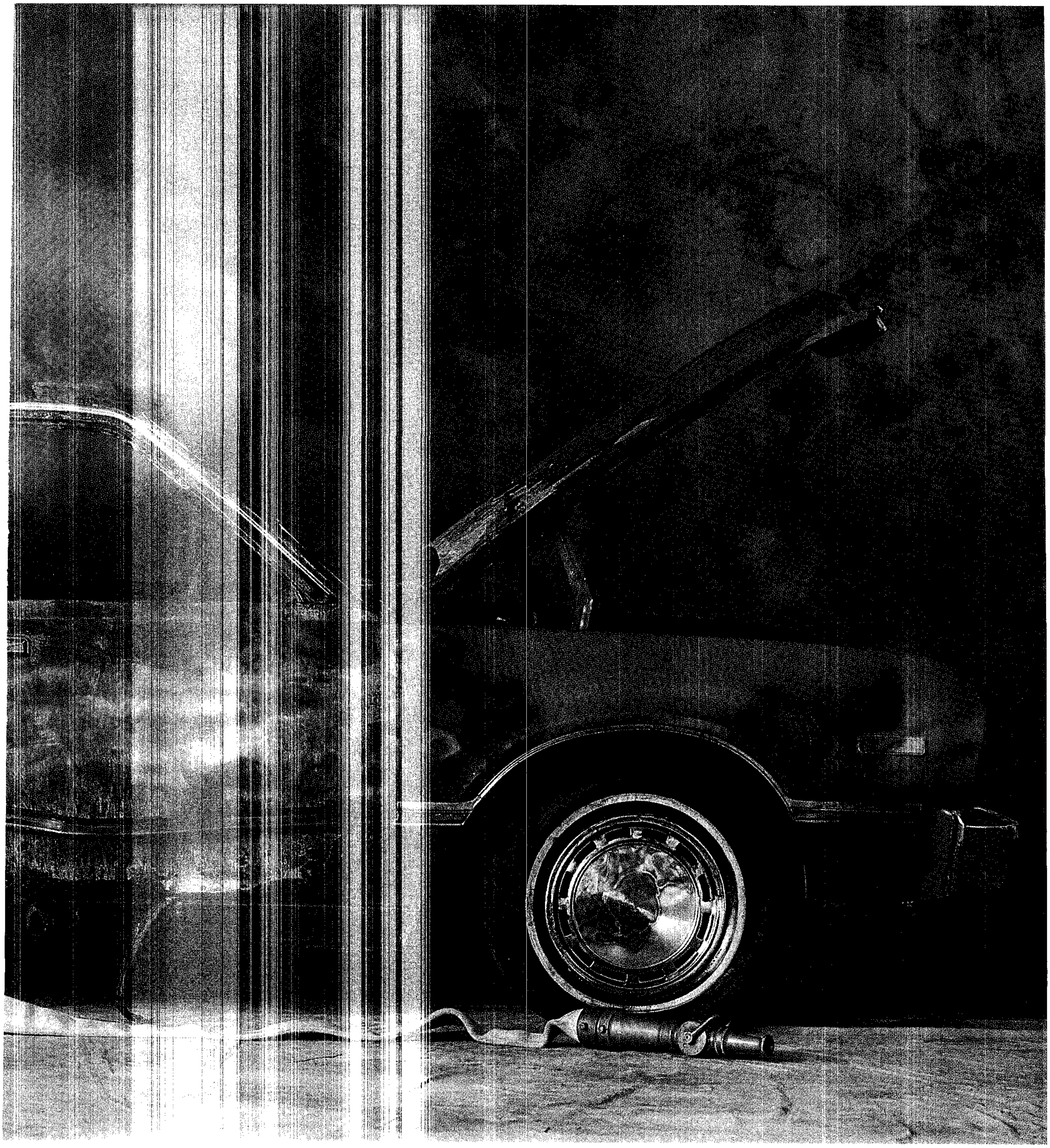

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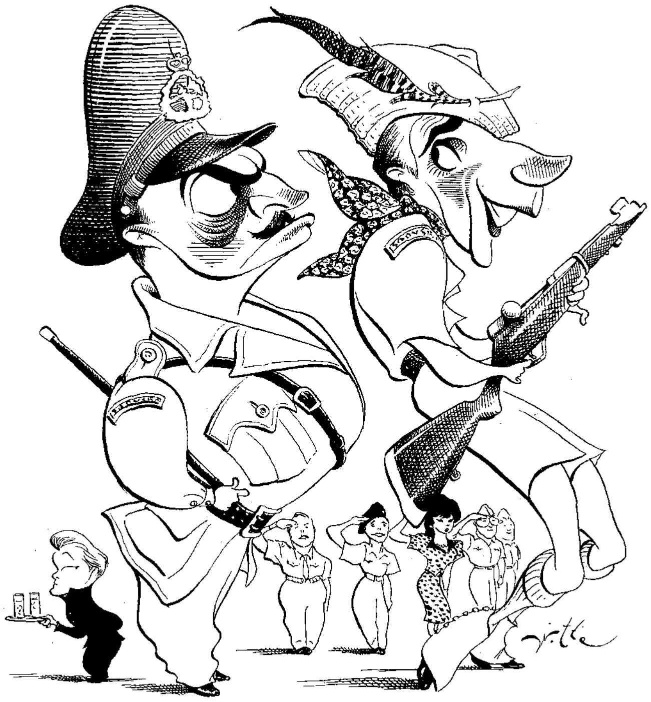
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

THE Ritz Theatre, on West 48th Street, is being "restored to its original architectural and decorative design and renamed for eminent theatre critic Walter Kerr"—or so we read in a press release that crossed our desk lately. The Ritz, which was built in 1920 and served intermittently as a radio station (it was from here that Alexander Woollcott broadcast his views as the Town Crier), is owned and operated by the Jujamcyn chain; in recent seasons, it has housed such disparate crowd-pleasers as "No Sex, Please, We're British" and "Doubles."

We have nothing but the deepest affection for Walter Kerr. We grew up on his Sunday criticism and still miss those weekly appearances in the *Times'* Arts and Leisure section, which we reach for sad in the knowledge that whatever subject we are about to immerse ourself in will not be treated with the Walter Kerr wisdom, urbanity, and perspective. All the same, we think it's funny to rechristen a theatre and name it after a living critic, as the owners of the Mansfield did when they changed its name to the Brooks Atkinson—as though a critic's name is some sort of guarantee of quality. The proprietors of movie houses in the theatre district sometimes play with words to make their product more attractive to the audiences they think they cater to. (On a 42nd Street marquee, some years ago, the title "Prizzi's Honor" became "Prizzi's Murder.") Perhaps Rocco Landesman, president of Jujamcyn, hopes that in making *his* name change he will be catering specifically to an audience that values wisdom, urbanity, and perspective. If so, we can think of worse things to strive for.



Simon Jones and Jim Dale in "Privates on Parade"

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3	4	5	6			

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Sweeney Todd—Bob Gunton and Beth Fowler in the York Theatre Company's production of the Sondheim musical, which had a brief run uptown last spring. Susan H. Schulman is the director. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

RECENTLY OPENED

Aristocrats—Brian Friel's portrait of the family of Judge O'Donnell, of Ballybeg Hall, in Donegal, is witty, ironic, and loving. Directed by Robin Lefèvre. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/8/89.) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 246-0102.)

Black and Blue—An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while Ruth Brown, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, Bunny Briggs, Jimmy Slyde, and a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (2/6/89, under Dancing.) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.)

A Hot Minute—A musical revue, conceived by Melanie Mintz, about backup singers and their aspirations toward the big time. With Vivian Cherry, Pattie Darcy, Jon Fiore, Vicki Sue Robinson, and John-Martin Green. Final performances Sept. 5-6 at 8 and 11. (Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. 228-6300.)

Jerome Robbins' Broadway—A collection of high spots from "On the Town," "Billion Dollar Baby," "High Button Shoes," "The King and I," "Peter Pan," "West Side Story," "Gypsy," "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," and "Fiddler on the Roof," all of which were choreographed or directed, or both, by Jerome Robbins. The evening is an orgy of family entertainment, a display of theatrical arts and crafts, and a canonization of Robbins and his era. Whether the fifties was your generation or your parents', this is the show for you. (3/13/89, under Dancing.) (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Kathy and Mo Show: Parallel Lives—Comedy skits and vignettes about gender and its role in society, written and performed by Kathy Najimy and Mo Gaffney. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394.)

The Lady in Question—Charles Busch's new play, set in Germany during the Second World War, is the perfect entertainment for a hot summer night—or a cool autumn evening. It's less pointedly a parody of one genre or movie than his last work, "Psycho Beach Party," was, and more a travesty of an entire week's worth of TNT programming, compressed into a single evening of theatre. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

Largely New York—It would be a mistake to assume that Bill Irwin's dance-mime extravaganza is fundamentally boring because it lacks words; in fact, it has the best "book" on Broadway. The piece is partly a sendup of theatrical technology, partly a comment on the ills that beset a pluralistic society, and partly a debate about art. Irwin puts onstage all the conflicts, tensions, and antagonisms of modern city life and resolves them by means of an invented language. His solution is unrealistic—it obtains only in a theatre—but what makes the message so uplifting is that to understand it you have to learn a new idiom. (5/15/89) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 246-0102. Closes Sept. 2.)

Lend Me a Tenor—The setting of this farce by Ken Ludwig is a hotel suite in Cleveland in 1934, where a famous tenor who is booked to sing "Otello" takes an overdose of barbiturates. A substitute must be found. Under Jerry Zaks' direction, all the surprises up the dramatist's sleeve are brought to comic life. Philip Bosco, Victor Garber, Tovah Feldshuh, J. Smith-Cameron, Ron Holgate, Jane Connell, and Jeff Brooks make up the splendid cast. (3/13/89) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Love Letters—Staged readings of A. R. Gurney's two-character play. Aug. 29-Sept. 3, Dana Ivey and George Segal, and Sept. 5-10 Swoosie Kurtz and Richard Thomas. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Mandy Patinkin in Concert: Dress Casual—So called, presumably, because the *chanteur* gets to wear sneaks and a T-shirt—a costume that pretty much sets the tone for an evening of glorious song and good fun. Patinkin here tends to sing only what is either very, very simple (and old) or very, very complicated (and Sondheim). Half the show's pleasure derives from Patinkin's between-song (in some cases even mid-song) patter and the relationship that develops between him and his able pianist, Paul Ford. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 246-0102. Closes Sept. 16.)

Only Kidding!—Jim Geoghan's comedy about standup comedians, in all their panic and desperation, has the ring of authenticity, and jokes that invariably pay off. (One monologue, about a Greek restaurant, is a knockout.) All the actors do well, under the lively direction of Larry Arrick. (5/29/89) (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394.)

Other People's Money—Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York stockbroker's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. Kevin Conway can seldom have been better or funnier than he is as Bronx-born Lawrence Garfinkle. Janet Zarish plays his adversary (with a difference). (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Privates on Parade—Jim Dale and Simon Jones star in the 1977 musical by Peter Nichols (book and lyrics) and Denis King (score). (Reviewed in this issue.) (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

Shenandoah—John Cullum reprises his original role in a revival of the 1975 musical, which was based on James Lee Barrett's 1965 film of the same name. Score by Gary Geld, lyrics by Peter Udell, and book by Mr. Barrett, Philip Rose (who once again directs), and Mr. Udell. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102. Closes Sept. 2.)

Shirley Valentine—Willy Russell's play about a Liverpool housewife who, feeling herself engulfed by drab domesticity, flies off to Greece, where she finds a temporary lover and lives happily ever after. With Ellen Burstyn in the title, and only. Directed by Simon Callow. (2/27/88) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Showing Off—As comedy revues go, this one—written by Douglas Bernstein and Denis Markell—isn't at all bad. The winning performances by Mr. Bernstein, Marilyn Pasekoff, Mark Sawyer, and Veanne Cox often make the material seem better than it is, but ultimately they don't compensate for the over-all smugness of what is essentially lifestyle comedy. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)

Titus Andronicus—The second, and final, offering in the New York Shakespeare Festival's summer series in the Park. With Donald Moffat, Kate Mulgrew, and Keith David. The director is Michael Maggio. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st. St. Closes Sept. 3. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

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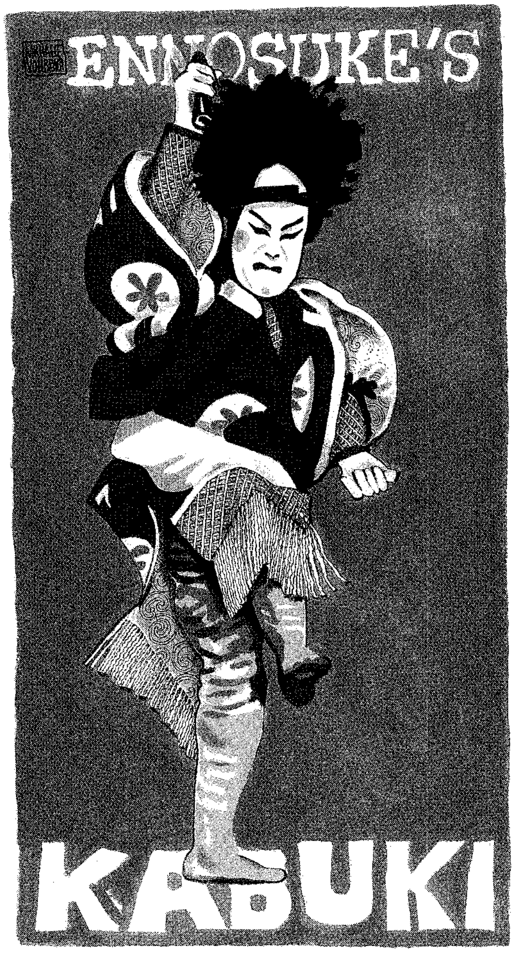
LONG RUNS

ANYTHING GOES: This exuberant revival is primarily a celebration of Cole Porter himself. The company, which includes Leslie Uggams, Gerry Vichi, and Gregg Edelman, does more than justice to the words and score. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 3.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **A CHORUS LINE:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal, and by the time the evening is over we know everything about all of them. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **DRIVING MISS DAISY:** Frances Sternhagen and Earle Hyman star in Alfred Uhry's play, which tells of the growing attachment of a cranky old woman in Atlanta to her black chauffeur. Directed by Ron Lagomarsino. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run recently turned twenty-nine. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1989:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. The performers are Toni DiBuono, Dorothy Kiara, David B. McDonald, and Michael McGrath. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **THE HEIDI CHRONICLES:** Wendy Wasserstein's play looks at first glance like standard baby-boom playwriting fare, but some alchemical combination of graceful-mindedness and good writing enables her to capture, lampoon, and transcend her generation all at the same time. With a superb cast, led by Joan Allen. Starting Sept. 5, Christine Lahti will replace Miss Allen. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **I COULD GO ON LIP-SYNCHING!:** This one-man variety show made up of cultural arcana is kind of weird, kind of quirky, and kind of brilliant. Performed by John Epperson and written by him and Justin Ross (who directed), it uses the rhetorical tactics of drag theatre to attack some of the Big Questions, managing not so much to raise lip-synching to an art as to transform aural montage into psychodrama. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556.) . . . **INTO THE WOODS:** This musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine is an attempt to show what lurks beneath the surface of conventional fairy tales. The songs are beautiful or funny—sometimes both. Directed by Mr. Lapine. The cast includes Ellen Foley and Chip Zien. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-6363. Closes Sept. 3.) . . . **M. BUTTERFLY:** Tony Randall has joined the cast of David Henry Hwang's funny, mysterious, and often beautiful play. With B. D. Wong. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220.) . . . **ME AND MY GIRL:** An infelicitously rehabilitated British musical out of the thirties. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** The much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **RUMORS:** This farce about a party to celebrate a couple's tenth anniversary (the host and hostess are mysteriously absent) may well be the funniest play that Neil Simon has written. It is acted to perfection by, among others, Ron Leibman, Joyce Van Patten, Charles Brown, and Cynthia Darlow, under the impeccable direction of Gene Saks. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** This first play by Robert Harling is set in a beauty shop in a small town in Louisiana and consists mainly of the often amusing, wise-cracking chatter of the proprietress, her assistant, and four steady customers. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 246-0102.)



At the Met

DANCE

THERE are many fine recordings of Tchaikovsky's oeuvre, but few that adequately account for its deeply physical force—the tension that makes it so danceable. Among the recordings of "The Sleeping Beauty" that we've encountered, only one continuously invokes dance action: the great 1955 RCA Victor Red Seal version, based on the production of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, with the orchestra of the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, conducted by Robert Irving. The old Red Seal line, long out of print, has begun to be reissued on CD, and we hope this particular treasure will be among those retrieved.

Mr. Irving has recently marked his thirtieth year as principal conductor of the New York City Ballet orchestra, yet little of his artistry as the world's greatest living conductor for dancing is commercially available, apart from "A Balanchine Album" for Elektra/Nonesuch, containing the "Emeralds" section of "Jewels," "Agon," "Serenade," and "The Four Temperaments." Robert Hurwitz, senior vice-president and general manager of Elektra/Nonesuch, told us that discussions of more recordings are ongoing but still inconclusive. He did assure us that the recording company plans to keep "A Balanchine Album" in print "as long as we're making records." Mr. Hurwitz also noted that around the time Mr. Irving joined N.Y.C.B., he and the orchestra made recordings for the now defunct Kapp record label of Balanchine's complete "Nutcracker," "Symphony in C," "Gounod Symphony," and "Western Symphony," all well worth reissuing. "Mr. Irving's conducting was not just beating time or getting all the notes right or the intonation perfect," Mr. Hurwitz said. "With him, the *feeling* of the whole piece would be there. His score is the score on paper *and* the score on the stage. With Irving, you have a complete package."

IN TOWN

ENNOSUKE'S KABUKI—A sixty-member group of actors and musicians from Tokyo in "Yoshitsune Senbonzakura" and "Kurozuka." The first of eight performances is Sept. 6 at 8. (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 362-6000. Through Sept. 12.)

DEBRA LOEWEN—A Milwaukee choreographer and her troupe, the Wild Space Dance Company, presenting "Romantic Options," in their first New York engagement. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Aug. 31-Sept. 2 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL—The season here concludes with performances by the David Parsons Company. (Becket, Mass. 1-413 243-0745. Aug. 29-31 at 8; Sept. 1 at 8:30; and Sept. 2 at 2 and 8:30.)

NIGHT LIFE

THE fashionable pickup line at 5 & 10 No Exaggeration is "What are you singing?" On a recent Wednesday evening there, we watched "Unforgettable" sidle up to "Am I Blue?" and try it out. Wednesday is open-mike night at the cabaret-cum-junk-shop, and the volunteers—many of whom clutch sheet music and have the panicky body language of fish in a bucket—are grateful for conversation.

5 & 10 is something of an oddity for SoHo. Outside, there's a signboard bearing letters of praise from a few of the groups that have partied there, such as Clairol, American Airlines, and the Department of Motor Vehicles. Inside, the restaurant-and-bar smells like an attic, and is filled with artifacts from between the World Wars: a scalloped mirror, an Esso gas pump, a fortune-telling machine that answers questions like "Will I marry soon?" and "Am I a liar?" Those patrons braving the stage—all of whom perform two or three numbers with a chatty, dexterous house pianist—can sing anything they want and, believe us, they do. On the evening of our visit, we heard a mustachioed young man with a candy-striped shirt unbuttoned generously at the chest sing "There Goes the Ball Game"; a singer-trumpeter team perform a sexy, swaying version of "The Girl from Ipanema"; a woman in a red polka-dot dress and a bonnet sing "Someone to Watch Over Me"; and a young lady in a denim skirt who hugged herself a lot do back-to-back Streisand covers. 5 & 10 is hilarious and a little embarrassing. It's nice to know that there's a place where you can watch amateurs belt out songs they've loved all their life—a spot where you can sit back, sip Coke from a squat, old-fashioned bottle, and thank God it isn't you.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Thirty-year-olds in love call Mabel Godwin "a *scandal*." Now in her seventies, she remains a singer of racy jazz numbers, a devout chatterer, a wearer of gold lamé suits, and a pianist who perks along quite nicely to the accompaniment of a snare and a stand-up bass. Ms. Godwin performs Thursdays through Saturdays from nine-thirty. On Sundays, cornettist **LEE LORENZ** leads the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band, and on Mondays the Grove Street Stompers do their Dixieland thing. Arthur's is currently decorated for the holidays—Christmas, New Year's, Halloween, and St. Patrick's Day.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek cabaret on the edge of Chelsea, near the flower and fur markets. Singer and Broadway habitué Christine Andreas is in residence for the next couple of weeks. Also, on Sept. 1-2 **HELEN SCHNEIDER**—a Brooklyn-born blues singer who had a one-woman show called "A Flapper's Folly" a few years back—comes in at 11 to sing Sondheim.

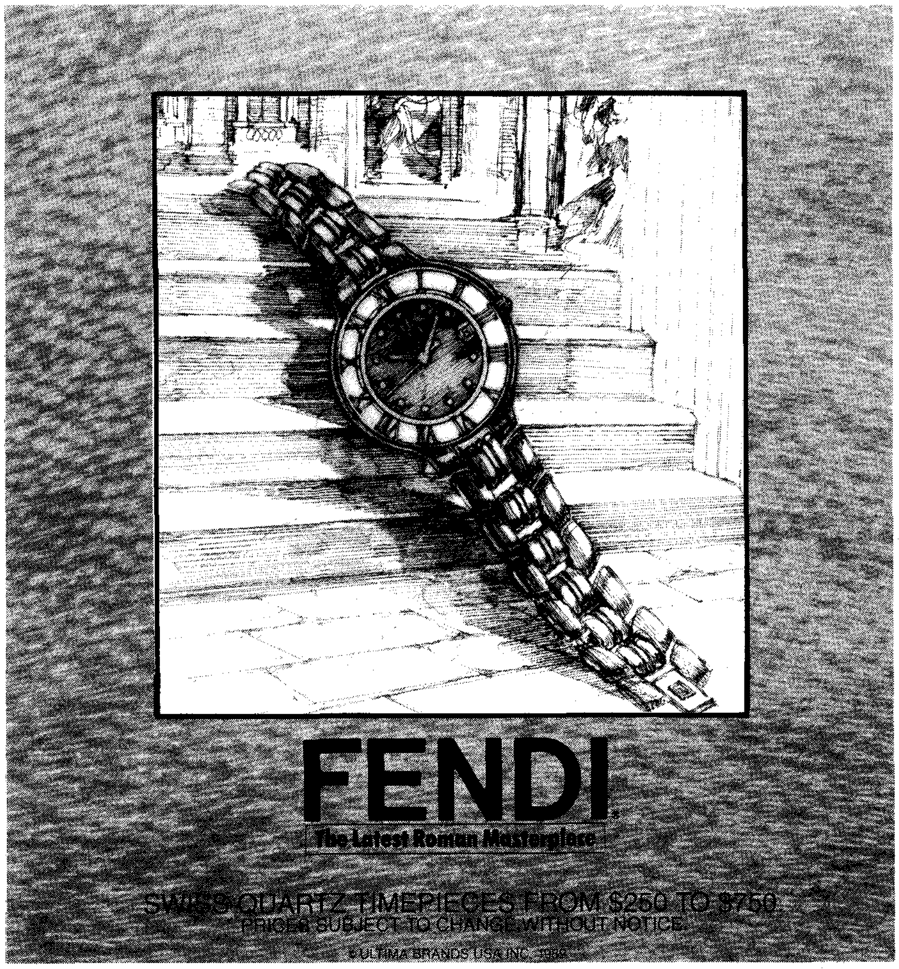
Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—A fledgling jazz operation that could easily be mistaken for a yuppie bar. The scenery includes waiters and waitresses in Reeboks and bow ties, a few trees, and some nice-looking neon wading birds. The wide-ranging pianist, saxophonist, and composer **JAKI BYARD** leads a duo on Aug. 28; on Aug. 29, alto-sax player **LOU DONALDSON'S** quartet celebrates the man after whom this club is named; pianist Mark Morganelli steps in on Aug. 31; and saxophonist **SONNY FORTUNE** fronts a quartet on Sept. 1. Music from nine Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A glitzy, color-coördinated jazz house, designed for maximum seating efficiency, where blue-suspendered waitresses sweep by your table bearing shrimp cocktails, champagne, and other trappings of the good life. After the show, out-of-towners flock to the upstairs souvenir shop, where, at last check, Blue Note golf balls were still available. The **DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND,** who started out as a traditional parade band in New Orleans and then worked with Ellington, Bird, and Monk, will be on hand Aug. 29-Sept. 3; they'll be joined by organist **RICHARD (GROOVE) HOLMES'** quartet, featuring **JUNIOR COOK** and **JIMMY PONDER.** The mood switches to Latin beginning Sept. 5, with the ensembles of **PAQUITO D'RIVERA** and **RAY BARRETTO.** Music from nine. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A Village bar that has long featured first-rate piano-bass teams and pro conversationalists and that now also features Bradley's T-shirts, Bradley's sweatshirts, Bradley's customized coasters, a person to take an admission fee, and a person to seat you and shush you. It's an institution. **KENNY BARRON'S** trio sets the pace through Sept. 2, followed by **MICHAEL WEISS'S** trio on Sept. 3. **WALTER DAVIS, JR.,** sits down at the piano on Sept. 4 and gets up six nights later. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlos I, 432 Sixth Ave., at 10th St. (982-3260)—The "great savory *pot au feu* called New York" (in the words of the great romantic Duke Ellington) has loads of West Indian restaurants, but not too many that feature name-brand jazz acts. **DAVID (FATHEAD) NEWMAN,** a man with solid soul credentials (Lowell Fulson, T-Bone Walker, Ray Charles), is the main attraction Aug. 29-Sept. 3. Saxophonist **LOU DONALDSON** starts up on Sept. 5. Music from nine-thirty.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—Chinese food served in a plush greenhouse setting. Through the glass roof, which supports a jungle of potted greenery, you can admire the fruits of the midtown real-estate boom and, when available, the moon. A Steinway grand is encamped in the middle of the room, making things tricky for the waiters but improving the over-all quality of life. Aug. 28 belongs to singer **JANE HARVEY;** Aug. 29-Sept. 1 to **HERMAN FOSTER** and **HARVIE SWARTZ;** and Sept. 2-4 to **MIKE LE DONNE** and **DENNIS IRWIN.** Pianist **JOHN BUNCH** and a trio kick off on Sept. 5. Music from eight Mondays through Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.



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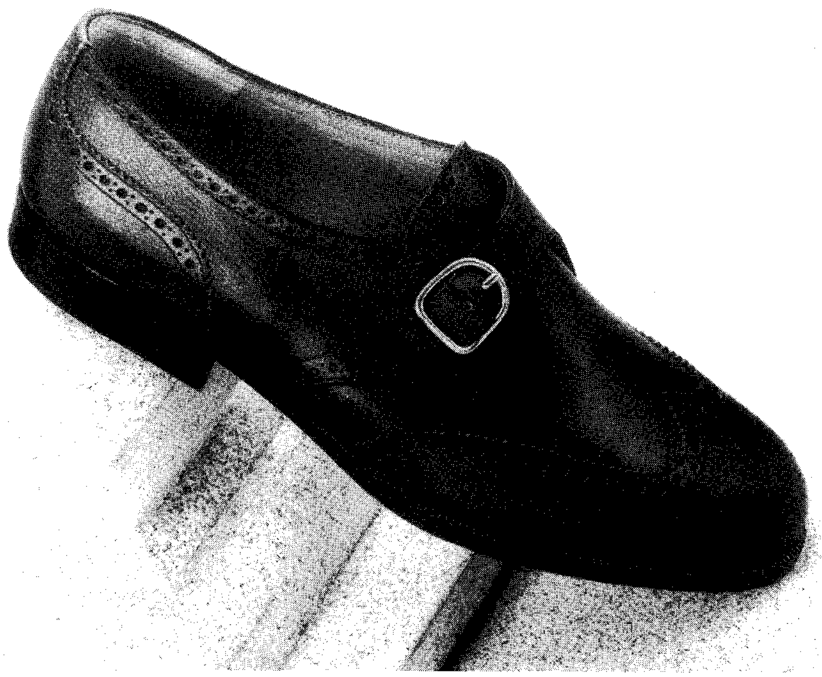

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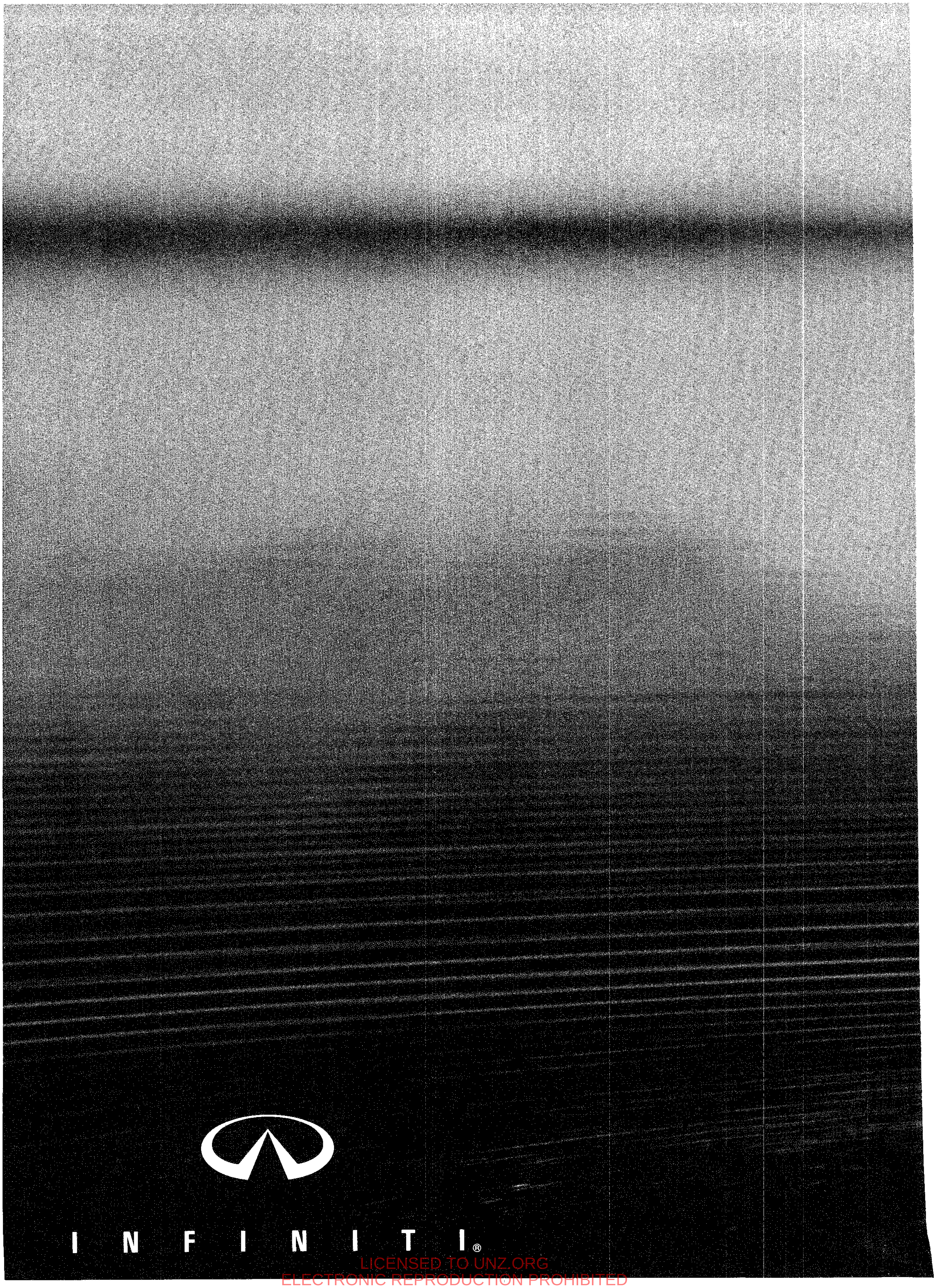

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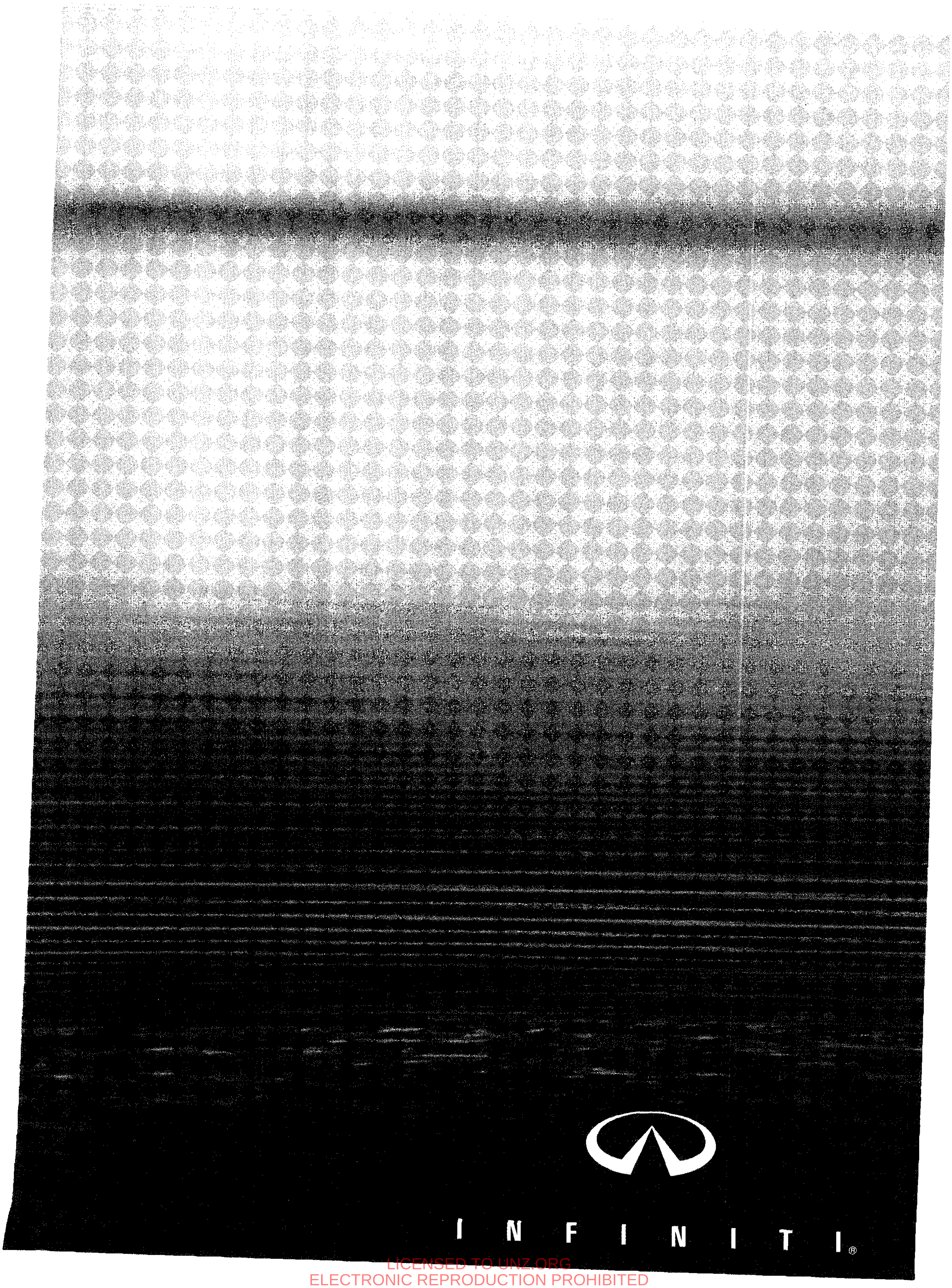
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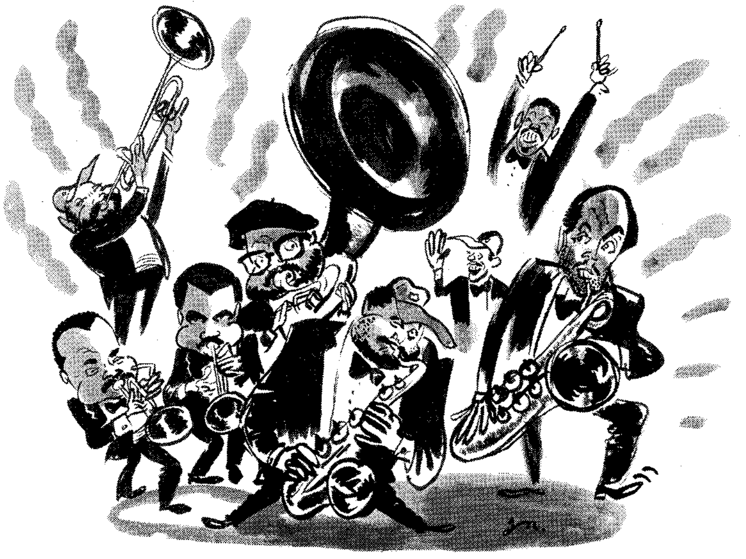
NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

GREENE STREET, 101 Greene St. (925-2415)—This is such a gorgeous, thirties-ish, movie set of a place, you expect gunmen to burst in at any moment. The restaurant and bar—forested and twilit—is about the size of a football field, with the piano at the fifty-yard line. If your seats are good enough, you'll hear some able entertainers, including pianist **PETE MALINVERNI,** who'll slip into a jazz-induced trance Sept. 5-6.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A busy bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. Pianist and Art Blakey alum **JAMES WILLIAMS** performs with bassist **JAMIL NASSER** Aug. 29-Sept. 1. Lisa Yves will be here Sept. 3, and the a-cappella outfit Five Play comes in on Sept. 4. Sundays are the property of singer-pianist-hot patootie **PHOEBE LÉGÈRE.** You may remember Ms. Légère's guitar work in the film "Mondo New York": a rather unorthodox, look-no-hands performance that very few people probably tried at home. Music from about nine-thirty.



The Dirty Dozen Brass Band at the Blue Note

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A second-floor music and performance space, where people come to ponder the meaning of harmolodics and the post-ness of postmodernism. The room is run by two amiable young guys from Wisconsin, whose views on such things as cover charges are enlightened. **PETER GORDON,** a musician of the downtown school—meaning he's a genre mixmaster—appears on Sept. 1; **FRED FRITH,** a British guitarist who leans toward experimental rock, is the main event on Sept. 3; and the **MICROSCOPIC SEPTET** comes in on Sept. 4. Music after nine.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—The façade is a Silver Eagle bus, the kind your itinerant musician tools around in. The inside is upscale roadhouse; it has a couple of postage-stamp dance floors and some real pretty Gibson guitars decorating the walls. Zydeco music can be heard on Aug. 29, with **LOUP GAROU,** and again on Aug. 30, with **C. J. CHENIER.** C. J. is the son of the late Clifton Chenier, in his day the king of the zydeco hill; aside from keeping his father's music alive, he's also keeping Clifton's band employed. **ROBERT GORDON,** a convincing rockabilly singer—he's got the voice, the hair, and the songs—entertains the jeans-and-T-shirt set on Aug. 31. Music after nine. Dining.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A mid-Manhattan pub for well-heeled gents and their high-heeled foxes. **FRANK GORSHIN,** who played the Riddler on the "Batman" TV series, continues his run. He's concentrating on impressions of Hollywood's leading men—including Jack Nicholson. Dining. Closed Sundays.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs about eight dollars. There are plenty of niceties if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and rest-room attendants who hover near the sink asking, "Is the water too warm?" Barbara McNair—a Chicago-born singer who broke in on "The Arthur Godfrey Show"—is the main attraction here right now. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A big, cheerful room, painted a light tropical blue, where you can pick 'em up and set 'em down to sounds from Brazil, Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. The schedule, in part: a "Night of Skins" on Aug. 30, with **TITO PUENTE, RAY BARRETTO, GIOVANNI HIDALGO,** and **DANIEL PONCÉ;** the Barbadian soca band Spice on Aug. 31 and Sept. 2; and the Blue Ventures on Sept. 1. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Mondays.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. **RON CARTER** brings in his quintet Aug. 29-Sept. 3, and **MC COY TYNER** gets under way on Sept. 5. The Hennessy Village Jazz Festival—also under way at the Village Gate—is in full swing now, with afternoon shows (featuring various artists) Aug. 29-Sept. 4. The electrified big band of the late Gil Evans, now under the direction of his son, the trumpeter Miles Evans, is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

VILLAGE GATE, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—Early in the evening, the downstairs room, which is as big and plain as a mess hall, continues to be the dominion of **SID CAESAR,** who winds up his comedy revue on Sept. 10. **BO DIDDLEY,** who continues to claim that Elvis stole his moves, closes the place Sept. 1-3. . . . ¶ One flight up, in the Terrace Bar, pianist Sharon Freeman and bassist Mike Richmond have a week-long stint beginning Sept. 5. Music from ten.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Perhaps the most famous basement in the world, now in its second half century, this establishment was once described by the late Max Gordon as "a good joint that people like to come to—thank God." Aug. 29-Sept. 3, a quartet belonging to alto-saxophonist **ARTHUR BLYTHE** will be in residence. Sept. 5 belongs to the Harper Brothers, a brash jazz collective led by drummer Winard Harper and trumpeter Philip Harper. On Mondays, young drummers from all over get a good look at **MEL LEWIS'S** hands. His big band is in action after ten.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St. at Bleecker St. (673-5576)—A tapas-and-flan concern, with a room for jazz. It's not a glamorous spot—unless you like framed puzzles—but the globe-trotting musicians who lay over here are worth watching. Downtown drummer and fusionist **BOBBY PREVITE** leads a quintet here on Aug. 30, and pianist **ANDY LAVERNE** heads up a quartet Aug. 31.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke-veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. The schedule just ahead includes Johnny Youth (Sept. 1), Hinantillan (Sept. 3), and the Lost Boys (Sept. 5).

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A spacious, lightly forested bar and restaurant with an in-between room from which music issues, putting an end to some discussions and inspiring others. Canadian vibraphonist **WARREN CHIASSON** performs with guitarist **CHUCK WAYNE** through Sept. 2; guitarist **TAL FARLOW** and bassist **GARY MAZZAROPPI** start up on Sept. 5. Music from eight weeknights.

OVER THE EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

THOUGH the press has now divided high society into two groups—those who attended Malcolm Forbes' Ali-Dada seventieth-birthday spectacular in Tangier and those who say they had something more pressing to do that weekend—they should remember that Mark Twain once said, "There are no common people except in the highest spheres of society." No columnists have noted that by the end of the second night an even higher élite had emerged, whose symbol was a status object as unexpected as it was obvious: an electric fan.

Security measures made it necessary for most of the well-wishers to stay under one roof, and of all the local hotels large enough to accommodate six hundred guests the Solazur was the best. However, it seems that few at the party had checked ahead about the nature of their accommodations. Consequently, on Friday night, scores of the most powerful, celebrated, pampered, and spoiled-rotten individuals (a sizable contingent of them from Manhattan) were horrified to discover that the Solazur was not air-conditioned.

For those who spent the first evening in the pool, directly behind the hotel, the moon was eclipsed by the sight of Le Cirque regulars hanging out windows flapping their shirts against their chests for air like mamas on Mulberry Street. By Saturday morning, the six-months-in-the-planning, multi-million-dollar, fireworks-drenched, Berber-studded extravaganza was not the hot topic. Barbara Walters was reacting to the temperature as though she'd been replaced on "20/20" by Diane Sawyer. Arnold Scaasi kept dousing himself with his new perfume. By noon, brigades were being dispatched to bring back anything with rotary blades.

By Sunday, most of the guests were both bedazzled and becalmed. Some had learned their lesson. "Where are you going from here?" Jerry Zipkin asked Calvin Klein. "We thought we'd go to Venice for a few days," the designer answered. "Venice!" Zipkin cried. "You can't. Venice is awful. I hope it sinks. It's over. It's had it. The water is full of algae and it smells because it's so hot. Go to Tuscany." "But Kelly and I had our hearts set on Venice," Klein replied. "Do what you like," Zipkin answered. "But take a fan."

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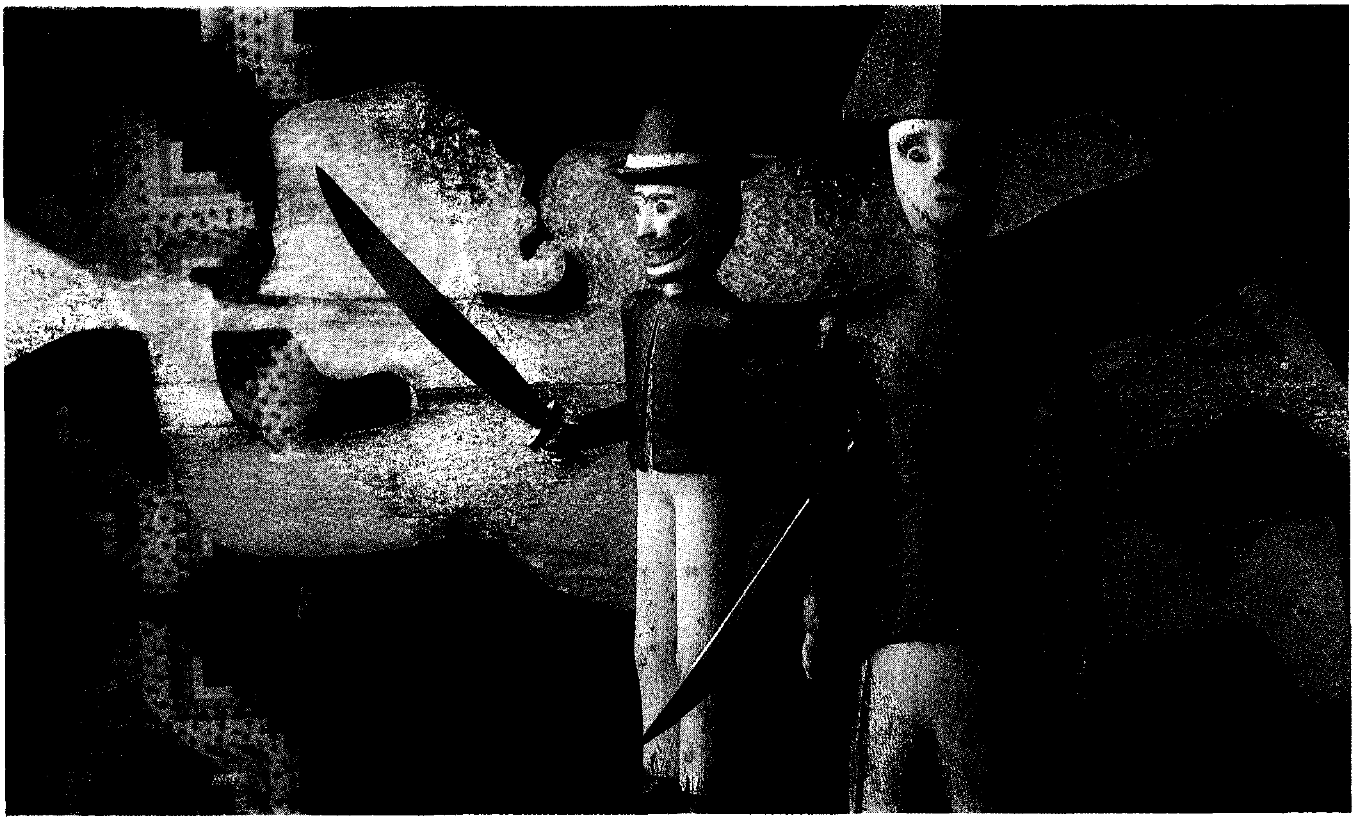

THE NEW ENGLAND PRESENTS CRAFTS THAT MIGHT HAVE GONE UNNOTICED 150 YEARS AGO.

An American Sampler
At the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut
June 14 – Sept. 3, 1989
At the New-York Historical Society, New York, New York
Oct. 3, 1989 – Jan. 7, 1990
At the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts
April 15 – Aug. 5, 1990

Folk art wasn't created for museum display. In homes and atop barns and businesses, these pieces played functional, decorative roles in daily American life.

Today, interest in folk art is soaring. Credit in large part is due to Electra Havemeyer Webb, a visionary collector who founded Vermont's Shelburne Museum.

To celebrate America's artistic heritage, some of the nation's leading museums are hosting a special exhibition, *An American Sampler: Folk Art from the Shelburne Museum.*

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ART

THE Morris-Jumel Mansion, a peeling, white, porticoed beauty set high on a Harlem promontory, amid the brambles and old rosebushes of Roger Morris Park, is Manhattan's only surviving Colonial residence and a historic nonpareil. Built in 1765 as a summer villa for the British colonel Roger Morris and his American wife, it was commandeered by both sides as a military headquarters during the Revolutionary War. Its drawing room, the first octagonal structure built in the Colonies, was used for courts-martial during the Battle of Harlem Heights. By 1785, however, that room was advertised as a good place to throw turtle-soup parties, and it was to a country tavern here called Calumet Hall that President Washington invited Jefferson, Adams, Madison, Hamilton, and Knox for a 1790 Cabinet dinner. (A stone marker out near the rose garden still tells us that we are eleven miles from the city.)

The really good part of the story, however, starts in 1810, when a French merchant, Stephen Jumel, bought the place with his wife, Eliza. Beautiful, brilliant, and business-minded—the Carolyne Roehm, perhaps, of her day—Eliza Jumel managed to acquire such treasures for the house as Napoleon's bed—she got hold of a lot of the Emperor's furniture when she was trying to persuade him to resettle in the States. She eventually married Aaron Burr (who nearly ruined her), and reportedly befriended Patrick Henry *and* Mr. and Mrs. Benedict Arnold along the way. She died very rich and lonely, all the same—be sure to read her obituary if you visit. The mansion (open Tuesdays through Sundays, from ten to four) has, so far, been only partly restored and still welcomes ghosts, but those who prefer their histories haunted and their houses in poetic disarray should hurry: extensive renovation plans are already under way.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Audubon Terrace—This configuration of Beaux Arts buildings at Broadway and 155th St.—including the Hispanic Society of America, the Museum of the American Indian, the American Numismatic Society, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and a branch of Boricua College—was designed by Charles P. Huntington, nephew of Archer Milton Huntington, founder of the Hispanic Society, and his wife, Anna Hyatt Huntington, a sculptor best known for her *animalier* themes. (Her statue of El Cid Campeador stands in the middle of the square.) The Hispanic Society in its evocative sleepiness remains an especially charismatic presence. There's a cryptlike space filled with alabaster tomb sculptures of a wrenching formality, case after case of sumptuous Hispano-Moresque lustreware, and marvellous *vargueños*—desks whose elaborate inside ornamentation includes high baroque architectural façades and twisting ivory columns. Despite some suspicious attributions, there's also an impressive collection of paintings by Spanish masters, including a portrait by Goya of the dour Duchess of Alba (who points to the artist's signature etched in the ground); Velázquez's forceful portrait of the Count-Duke of Olivares, a power behind the throne of Philip IV (the artist's patron); and a version of "Juan de Pareja" (after Velázquez's portrait at the Met) believed by some to have been executed by the subject. The Hispanic Society's main-floor room is a gem, with highly theatrical murals depicting the customs and costumes of the Spanish provinces, by Joaquím Sorolla y Bastida—rival to Zuloaga, Boldini, and Singer Sargent for the role of society Impressionist of the day. While you are on Audubon Terrace, you might visit the American Numismatic Society for a hardy sampling of military medalry, and a mini-history of coinage which begins with a spiral money ring from the period of Nushi-i Jan (seventh century B.C.) and ends with R. C. Robbins' Diners Club Card (member since 1982). And do not further neglect the Museum of the American Indian. With a troubled past, what remains of its encyclopedic collection—whatever has survived mold, bugs, and curatorial plunder—will be shifting to the Smithsonian, though an exhibitions program will continue at the Custom House in New York.

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—The name game has brought the museum an astonishing range of new displays in the past few years: in the Charlotte C. and John C. Weber Galleries of the Arts of Ancient China, for example, there is an exquisite if modest showcase for many of the museum's fine Chinese ceramics, bronzes, and jades, spanning the six millennia from the Neolithic Age through the T'ang dynasty. . . . ¶ The Henry R. Luce Center for the Study of American Art, located in the American Wing, displays the bulk of the Met's fourteen thousand American objects in glass storage cases with obsessive order. Sleek Frank Lloyd Wright tables sit near gloppy Victorian extravaganzas; dozens of Federal dining-room chairs are lined up in order of size; fanciful mirrors, painted Pennsylvania-German chests, scores of Tiffany vases, hundreds of colored bottles, and enough silver to serve the city amount to an encyclopedia of furnishings brought to life. . . . ¶ More like a bald pate than a planted penthouse, the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden, atop the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing of Twentieth Century Art, is ideal for the kind of nonobjective sculpture currently on display there, such as David Smith's "Becca" and Reuben Nakian's "Garden of the Gods I." From this unadorned treetop perch the enormousness of the museum drops away and what remains is a spectacular panorama of Central Parks West and South, and Fifth Avenue. . . . ¶ A strong dose of three decades of Lucas Samaras's work on paper is currently on view in the Berggruen Klee Gallery, in the Wallace Wing, and it offers a fresh take on an underexamined branch of the artist's output. The collection —which was donated to the museum by Samaras's dealer and his wife—leaves one wanting to see more of the artist's prescient use of photography for drawing and collaging and his gothic expressions of sexuality. . . . ¶ "Invention and Continuity in Contemporary Photographs." Through Oct. 8. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—An installation by Matt Mullican of computer-based works. Through Oct. 24. . . . ¶ A show of Cubist prints. Through Nov. 7. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The current installation from the permanent collection emphasizes the museum's superb, specialized holdings in nonobjective European art. . . . ¶ Also on display from the collection is an enormous circle of red-slate fragments, assembled by the peripatetic English artist Richard Long—a poetic sort of walker. Long, who has a way of making atavistic practices speak to us in sophisticated terms, recently installed four other pieces—including two with text, and another made with his handprints. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays, 11 to 7:45, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 4:45.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A current show, of works acquired over the last fifteen years, provides a fascinating example of institutional collecting. In early-twentieth-century art, the focus has been on artists such as Elie Nadelman, who is represented by some major pieces, and Georgia O'Keeffe, who is represented by some weak ones, and on a number of finely selected drawings and watercolors. Contemporary holdings include quintessential works by Joel Shapiro and Elizabeth Murray, for example, acquired in the late seventies, and a diptych by Eric Fischl, from the mid-eighties. In the past few years the museum's purchases have become fewer and have focussed on historical gaps: Tony Smith's important sculpture "Die" and an Eva Hesse rope piece, for example. Through Oct. 15. . . . ¶ A show of oils, watercolors, prints, and drawings by Edward Hopper. The hundred and fifty works span the artist's career, and are drawn from the museum's collection. Through Nov. 5. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Whitney Museum Downtown, 33 Maiden Lane—"The Desire of the Museum": This provocative show, organized by student curators, presents the institution of "the museum" as a living entity, with its own set of desires and unspoken agendas. It does not include some of the better-known artistic examinations of the museum frame, by such artists as Claes Oldenburg, Marcel Broodthaers, and Michael Asher. It does feature a Marcel Duchamp piece, which contains reproductions of the master gamesman's ready-mades; Richard Artschwager's hairy rubber blips, which are strategically installed in unexpected locations; Hans Haacke's portrait of the extra-aesthetic life of Seurat's "Les Poseuses"; and Mark Dion and Jason Simon's tales of pictures that were badly damaged or painted and then economically revitalized through conservationist cunning. The curators try to push their point too far with gimmicky inter-

LOW RISE

The John Q. Aymar Building, at the corner of 23rd Street and Eighth Avenue, radiates enormous pride. It's the sort of building you might see on Main Street in Anytown, U.S.A.: a two-story limestone affair, vaguely Deco with classical overtones, housing a five-and-dime, a restaurant, and a few smaller shops on the ground floor, with offices upstairs. If this were Anytown, the Aymar Building would also sport a big American flag outside, because it would contain the local post office; it would look substantial, if not imposing, and would tell you at a glance that Mr. Aymar was the biggest deal in town. Only this is Manhattan, and the place looks like a peanut; and what sort of person, you wonder, as you double back down Eighth Avenue in disbelief, would inscribe his name in such big, bold, classical letters on the side of a peanut? A person who's proud of building something on a human scale.

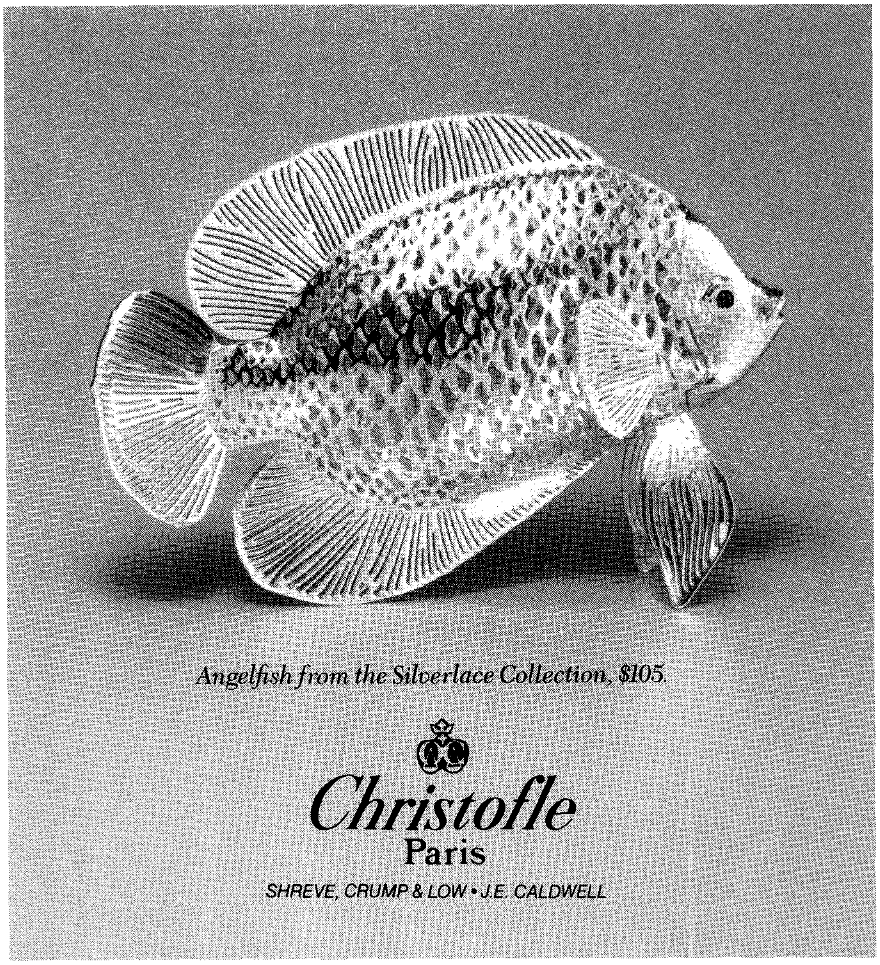
ventions (including die-cut questions beside the art works, such as "What does the museum want?"), but this show—which also includes Guerrilla Girls' posters, Allan McCollum's painted surrogates, Louise Lawler's photo wall labels, and more—is long overdue. Through Sept. 12. (Open Mondays, except Labor Day, through Fridays, 11 to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—An exhibition of thirty Mughal paintings—miniatures, mostly, in opaque watercolors and ink on paper—tracing changes in the style from the late-fifteenth to the late-eighteenth centuries. . . . ¶ "Andrew Wyeth: The Helga Pictures." Through Sept. 18. . . . ¶ "Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters & Sculptors." . . . Concurrent with the show of Hispanic art is a forceful lobby installation by Alfredo Jaar, a Chilean artist living in New York. Through Sept. 4. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

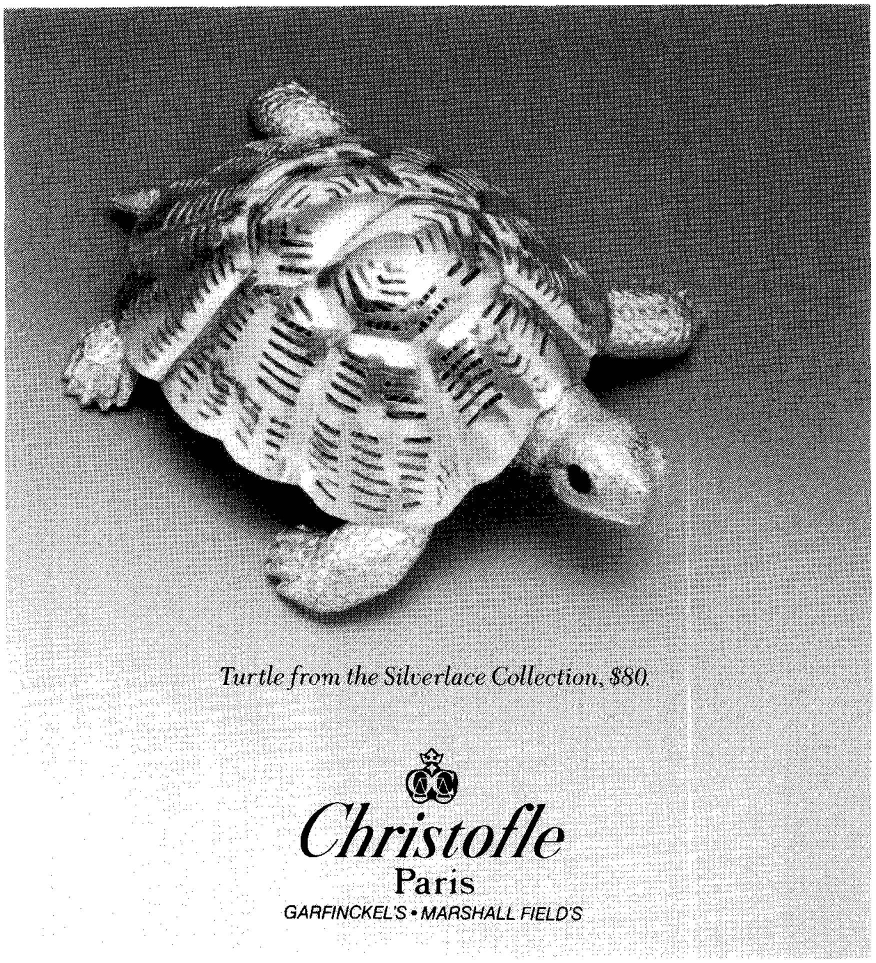
American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—A display of Saudi Arabian dress in which traditional *thawbs,* for instance, are seen alongside a cloak that

VOLARE

It's clearly time to rethink the whole question of air rights from a new point of view—a bird's-eye view. Why should air rights be the property of building owners, or even neighborhoods? Anything above brownstone level intrudes on birdland. It's about time we began giving back some compensation for our aerial expansion. Acceptable zoning provisions, a little birdie told us, might include feeding stations at five-story intervals on all high-rise construction; satellite-dish birdbaths on the terraces of residential buildings; a citywide ban on Oven Stuffer Roasters; pigeon-exchange programs with London and Venice; and an Avenue of the Aviaries, connecting the tops of tall buildings, with street lamps adorned with plaques commemorating Lady Bird Johnson, Cindy Birdsong, Barbara (Seagull) Hershey, Poe's raven, the Bird Man of Alcatraz, and the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds.


Angelfish from the Silverlace Collection, $105.

Christofle
Paris
SHREVE, CRUMP & LOW • J.E. CALDWELL


Turtle from the Silverlace Collection, $80.

Christofle
Paris
GARFINCKEL'S • MARSHALL FIELD'S

belonged to King Faisal. Through Oct. 29. (Open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5:45; Wednesdays, 10 to 9; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"Rain of Talent: Umbrella Art": A mild drizzle of some thirty altered umbrellas suspended from the ceiling of the main stairwell. The talents include Rhonda Zwillinger, Kim MacConnel, Robert Venturi, Betty Woodman, and Rodney Alan Greenblat. Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—The most recent installation of works from the exemplary collection of John D. Rockefeller 3rd (the society's initial benefactor) highlights fine Chinese and Japanese porcelains, such as a grouping of small translucent celadon bowls and a large Ming water jar depiciting fish swimming among aquatic plants. There are also Hindu and Buddhist sculptures, mostly from India, and particularly enthralling are several Khmer stone statues, with their idealized naturalism, classically smooth surfaces, and utterly placid serenity masking what was a brutal warrior society. . . . ¶ A display of thirty-five Korean porcelains provides a good, if somewhat cursory, introduction to delicate work made during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910). Both shows through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse—Red Grooms' work is about as close as art gets to real entertainment, and his graphic work—the subject of this exhibition—is no exception. Included are some delightful three-dimensional lithographs that resemble permanently opened pop-up books. Through Sept. 10. (Open weekdays, except Fridays, 10 to 4:30; Sundays, 11 to 4:30.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Views of Rome: drawings of the eternal city in its semi-rustic, pre-Fellini state. Most are from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From the Thomas Ashby collection in the Vatican Library. A quality yawn. Through Oct. 29. . . . ¶ "Polished Perfection: The Art of Turned-Wood Bowls." In the nineteen-thirties and forties, almost as an afterthought to the Industrial Revolution, factory mass production displaced the artisan and his lathe in the creation of wood bowls. This show, of eighty works by twenty-one contemporary North American craftsmen (along with four bowls by four unknown Early American settlers), proves that the artisanal tradition has survived. Through Oct. 1. . . . ¶ A show of nineteenth-century jewelry, mostly from Europe and the United States, selected from the museum's permanent collection. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge from 5 to 9; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Exodus and Exile: 2,000 Years in Ancient Israel," an archeological exhibition tracing some of the cultural shifts and political cataclysms between 1200 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. that, bit by bit, transformed the Israelite kingdom into an international religious community—the birth, in short, of Jewish identity in the modern sense. A few objects, such as ancient mosaics and synagogue reliefs, have not been seen in this country before, and while they represent a fragmented and elusive story the show's attractive, playful installation is informative. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, noon to 5; Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—A show paying tribute to Jean Cocteau on his centenary: letters, first editions, and drawings by the author and artist; an oil of Cocteau by Modigliani, and a marble portrait bust by Jacques Lipchitz. Starts Sept. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	28	29	30	31	1	2
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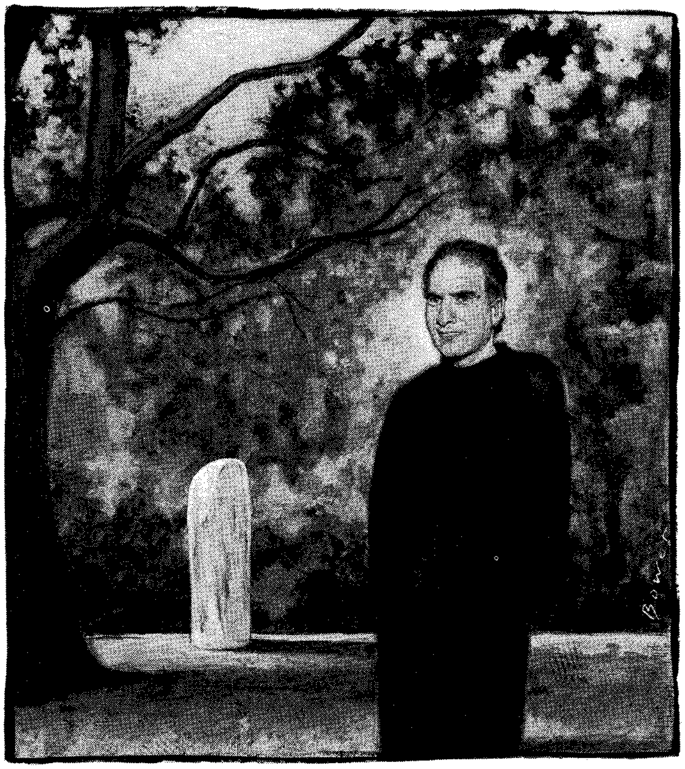
Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Stitched from the Soul: Slave Textiles from the Ante-Bellum South." This fascinating exhibition demonstrates that slaves preserved fragments of their African heritage in their quilts by combining native patterns, colors, and appliqué techniques with requisite Euro-American motifs. This display of quilts is double-edged: the most delicate ones were made by slaves for their mistresses, with whom they were often drawn into close and complicated relationships, while quiltmaking by slaves for their own use formed a fulcrum of their social life. Through Sept. 17. (Open daily, 9 to 9.)



Jene Highstein at Wave Hill

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—The Berg Collection has mounted a presentation of mostly letters and manuscripts in which poets and novelists from Chaucer to Bellow ruminate on love and death. Several of the selections are from works too often cited ("Romeo and Juliet," "Death Be Not Proud"), while others (excerpts from Defoe's "Journal of the Plague Year," various notices written on mourning stationery) seem to lack insight into the themes. But a few fresh, urgent passages add depth and wit to the show: a series of love letters by Clifford Odets, in which he writes of rolling around in the grass and of the meaning of life; "Who's Most Afraid of Death?," a haunting poem by E. E. Cummings (inscribed to his wife) that achieves a near-perfect unity of love and death; and a group of three letters from an aggrieved Charles Dickens, all of which announce to his friends the passing of his beloved pet, Grip the raven: "My dear sir . . . Grip is no more." (Berg Collection Exhibition Room. Open daily, except Thursdays, Sundays, and Labor Day, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ Botanical illustrations from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, among them Georg Ehret's colored engraving "Yucca Aloifolia," a couple of Redouté watercolors and prints of his work from "Les Roses" and "Les Liliacées," and watercolors by Lilian Snelling, Mary Grierson, and Pandora Sellars. Through Sept. 2. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Road, Long Island City—Noguchi, one of the twentieth century's singular talents, designed this oasis for more than two hundred and fifty of his sculptures. It contains a wide range of his work—from the early surrealistic biomorphic pieces through several types of stone carvings—and documentation of his prodigious public art. The centerpiece of the museum is a peaceful ivy-walled garden dotted with sculptures. (Open Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—This first retrospective of the well-regarded African-American painter Hughie Lee-Smith includes some moving and unusual portraits of isolation, made in the fifties, that call to mind Marsh, Tooker, and the early Guston, and sixties works depicting isolated figures next to metal poles with colored ribbons flapping from them. In the seventies and eighties, the subtle surrealist cast fades and a relatively ordinary urban realism remains. . . . ¶ Graphics and installations that incorporate photography, the work of fifteen contemporary artists. Both shows through Sept. 24. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. They will be closed Labor Day.)

Jene Highstein / Mike Glier—Highstein's art is rooted in the situational sculpture of the early seventies, but here at Wave Hill, in this ideally sited indoor-outdoor display of work from the past five years, the artist's interest in traditional sculpture-making predominates. Large masses of marble have been chiselled, chinked, bored, and pounded, and tree trunks have been stripped, smoothed, and bleached into sturdy abstract forms that suggest toadstools, a beached whale, and Rodin's "Balzac." Sometimes the artist's debt to Noguchi is too strong, but Highstein can also fashion an awkward, chunky shape into a breathing entity that transcends its material. Through Oct. 8. / Glier's drawings, in what was once a formal dining room, establish him as today's great baroque wall decorator. The artist has drawn luscious, moody landscapes—in bravura gray washes that have the brooding mystery of the German Romantics—evoking the postcultural miasma of J. G. Ballard's novels, and infusing the scenes with the artist's own sense of dark peacefulness. Through Dec. 31. (Wave Hill, Independence Ave. at 249th St., the Bronx. Closed Mondays.)

"China—June 4, 1989 . . ."—The Asian American Arts Centre has responded to the brutal military force used against protesting students in Tiananmen Square with a video program of television news documentaries in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin; an exhibition of vivid photographs; and an evolving "Artist Wall," a folding screen that is being made from doors and decorated by interested artists. The most compelling work on it looks like a metal prison door with a map of China behind a barred window. Through Sept. 29. (26 Bowery.)

Group Shows—At the **Hanson,** 415 West Broadway: It's worth muddling past the anemic independent-curator type of art here for Dean McNeil's post-minimal concrete sculptures, which look like early Joel Shapiros but which actually contain small electronic gadgets (a Sony Watchman, a Canon Typestar) and wittily express a wish to entomb the consumerist preoccupation of much of today's more celebrated contemporary art; and for some funny and disturbing abstract paintings by Charles Clough. Through Sept. 1. . . . **Herstand,** 24 W. 57th St.: This hodgepodge of twentieth-century sculptures (with one from the late nineteenth century) seems to lack a historical point. But it does include some stunning bronzes, particularly an animated Rosso bust of a laughing child, a proto-Cubist 1906 Picasso nude, and Brancusi's recumbent head of a sleeping child (1908). The postwar sculptures are not as well selected but include some wonderfully theatrical bronzes by the contemporary artist Ann McCoy, such as a bed on a winged Etruscoid barge, and a dreamy grouping that includes a classical altar, a strongbox draped with a lily, and some mystical-looking abaci. Through Oct. 14. . . . **KNOEDLER,** 19 E. 70th St.: Suffocating, perfumed elegance by such artists as Motherwell, Stella, Rauschenberg, and Heizer is, sadly, in great abundance here. Through Sept. 11. . . . **PACE,** 32 E. 57th St.: "Sculpture by Painters," many of whom are gallery artists, including Condo, de Kooning, Dine, Dubuffet, Johns, Kelly, Lichtenstein, Miró, Morley, Newman, Picasso, Schnabel, Twombly, and Warhol. Condo, who is new to the medium, makes an auspicious début in this handsome exhibition. Through Sept. 1. . . . **WASHBURN,** 41 E. 57th St.: The fiftieth anniversary of the New York World's Fair is celebrated with a group of American paintings made circa 1939. The show is dominated by geometric and biomorphic abstractions that owe a great deal to Europe. Much of the work is attractive and thoughtful, often dryly so. Included are an interesting David Smith painting and a huge canvas of a W.P.A. mural by Ilya Bolotowsky, which demonstrates Klee-like whimsy on a grand scale. There's also an appealing Alice Trumbull Mason, which has a little brushy fire that suggests the more assertive America that was soon to come. Through Aug. 31. . . . **YORK,** 21 E. 65th St.: The main room is given over to stiff and provincial American landscape and figurative paintings of the nineteenth century, but the entranceway is devoted to work from the early twentieth century that displays a more engaged idea of culture: an ink sketch of New York by Stuart Davis, a watercolor of a house in the snow by Charles Burchfield, a painting of a lively urban crowd by Guy Pêne du Bois, a brooding still-life by Marsden Hartley, and an oil-and-sand composition of interlocking trapezoids by Charles Shaw. Through Sept. 1.

PHOTOGRAPHY

NO one can defend the importance of form in photography better than John Szarkowski, and few photographers can illustrate Szarkowski's words as well as Aaron Siskind. Szarkowski's selection of Siskind's prints from the many owned by the Museum of Modern Art is now on view there, and it's a treat. This is what the exploration of abstraction in photography looks like when it doesn't just come from an empty notion of artiness. Siskind never loosens the camera's grip on the world. As Szarkowski has written on a wall label, "The wall is a wall, stone is stone, the mark made by some unknown hand is as specific as a signature." Siskind's most abstract-looking photographs would hang beautifully in an exhibition of abstract painting; they would never be swallowed up by their larger neighbors.

The exhibition also includes a number of images that Siskind made in the thirties, when he was pursuing a more photojournalistic course. These earlier, rather sentimental pictures are ostensibly about people, but it's in Siskind's later photographs, those without figures, that we find his true record of individuals. In these shots, his preservation of a trace left by someone (say, two letters sprayed on a wall) commemorates that person's presence in the spot with such shine and clarity that, although the message may be anonymous, the man or woman who left it will not be forgotten.

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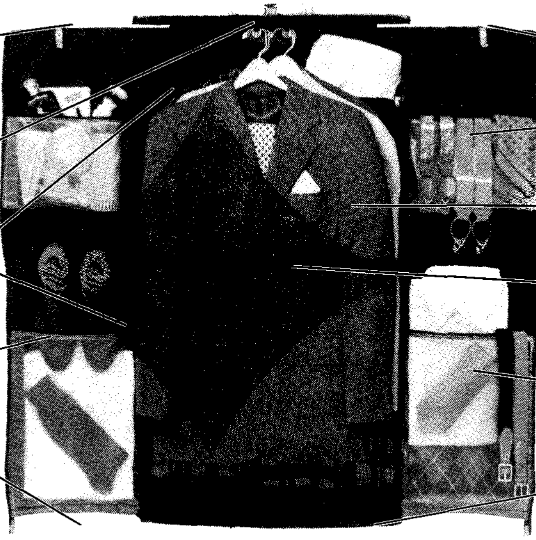
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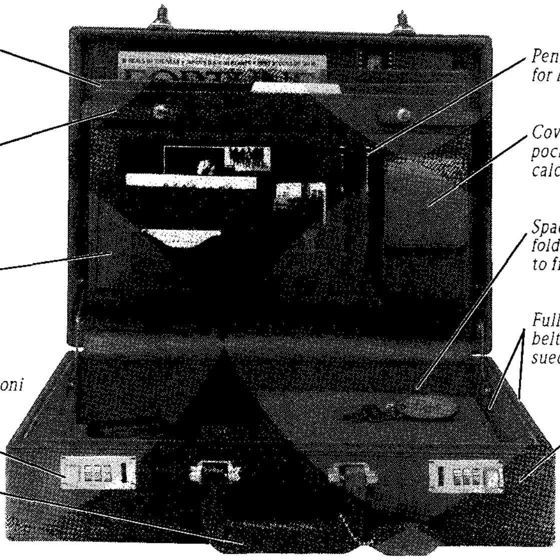
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Leather padded carrying handle with Bontex reinforcement.
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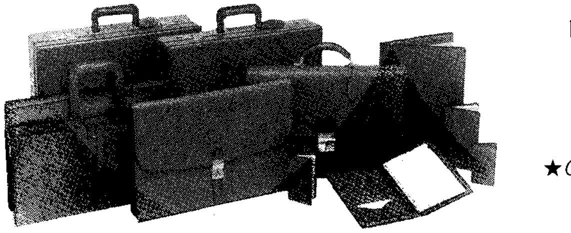

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Sidney D. Gamble (1890-1968)—A small selection of photographs from the thousands that the artist shot in China between 1917 and 1932. Gamble, also a sociologist, spent many years in China trying to understand it, writing about it, and taking pictures. This exhibition shows an observer who was interested in capturing both tradition and change. Through Sept. 9. (China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—Photographs and a video by six artists—Sophie Calle, Sarah Charlesworth, Donigan Cumming, Dieter Froese, Allan McCollum, and Angela Neuke—who concentrate on contemporary culture via work that explores the impact of the mass media, technology, and photojournalism. Through Sept. 3. (Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

"Shadows and Silhouettes"—Although shadows can dominate a photographer's mood, they are rarely given the kind of attention that light gets, so it's good to see pictures that are organized around them. The images on display here skip around the century; there are classics as well as lesser-known photographs; and altogether they make for a worthwhile little show that's more psychologically rich than formally inventive. Through Aug. 31. (Seagram Building, fourth floor, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St.)

"The Nature of New York City"—An array of photo opportunities that should have been missed. A number of the pictures feature weeds that are supposed to be touching but that need to be pulled. Through Sept. 30. (American Museum of Natural History. Open daily.)

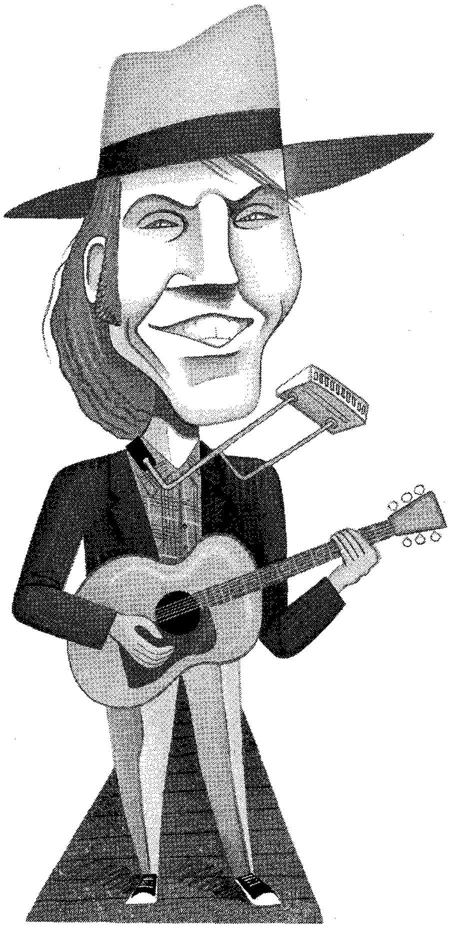
"Invention and Continuity in Contemporary Photographs"—The title promises more than what you actually get with this show. What's on display is a small selection of work, some of it strong and some as unsubtle as the curatorial method that has systematized the images into three obvious categories. Through Oct. 8. (Metropolitan Museum.)

Short List—**warren neidich,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. (opens at noon, closed Mondays, through Sept. 22); **aaron siskind,** Museum of Modern Art (through Oct. 10); **todd watts,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway (closed on Mondays, through Aug. 31).

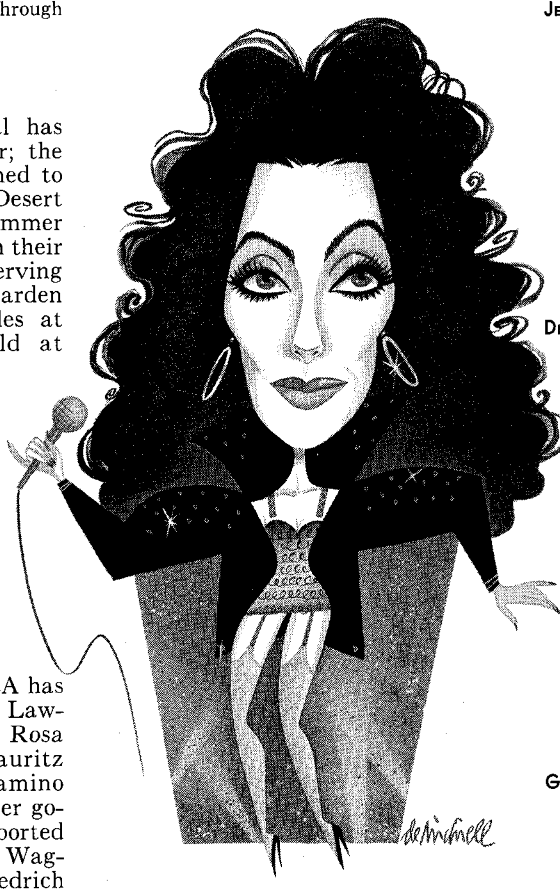
MUSIC

THE Mostly Mozart festival has closed up shop for the year; the New York City Opera has turned to Romberg (a little run of "The Desert Song" begins August 29); the summer festivals are mostly through with their "classical" offerings and are serving dessert (Diana Ross at the Garden State Arts Center; Ray Charles at Great Woods; Ella Fitzgerald at Tanglewood; Three Dog Night at Waterloo; and so forth).

Since we have learned from experience not to go to musicals and operettas at the City Opera, and since we are somehow not in the mood for dessert, our thoughts turn to recorded listening for the week's musical nourishment. We have been sampling a stack of new CDs, mostly of remastered old shellac disks, and waiting for a chance to hear them in full. RCA has brought back Marian Anderson, Lawrence Tibbett, Tito Schipa, Rosa Ponselle; Angel is giving Lauritz Melchior, Eva Turner, Beniamino Gigli, and Claudia Muzio another go-round; Pearl (a British label, imported by Qualiton here) has fantastic Wagner from Frida Leider and Friedrich Schorr, among much else. It's foolish, we know, to live in the past, but *gosh* they sing well.



Neil Young



Cher

New York City Opera—**the desert song,** with Michele McBride, Lillian Graff, Louise Hickey, and Richard White; James Allen Gahres conducting. (Aug. 29, Aug. 31, and Sept. 3, all at 8; Sept. 2 at 2.) . . . ¶ With Jane Thorngren, Lillian Graff, Louise Hickey, and William Parcher; James Allen Gahres. (Aug. 30, Sept. 1-2 at 8.) . . . **candide,** with Lisa Saffer, Maris Clement, Brooks Almy, and Robert Tate; Scott Bergeson. (Sept. 5 at 8.) . . . ¶ With Cyndia Sieden, Maris Clement, Muriel Costa-Greenspon, and Mark Beudert; Scott Bergeson. (Sept. 6 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

JAZZ / ROCK / POP / PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Jefferson Airplane—Like a convergence of heavenly bodies or perhaps a plague of locusts, swarms of rock stars in their mid-to-late forties seem to have obeyed some instinctive urge by drying out, consulting with their accountants, and darkening the skies over America in ghastly unison this summer. In a career move that was probably not based on a psychedelic revelation, five of the six original members of this agitprop Aquarian rock band have reunited and joined that voracious cloud, throwing oldies shadows on our eyes, leaving us helpless, helpless, helpless. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 757-3100. Aug. 29-30 at 8. . . . ¶ Jones Beach Theatre. Sept. 1 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-516 221-1000.)

Neil Young—"I've got to just tear down whatever has happened to me and build something new," this protean troubadour once said, and in his various manifestations over the past quarter century he has produced some of the finest (and sometimes weirdest) rock and folk music of our time. On this tour, he's spending most of his concert alone onstage with an acoustic guitar, a harmonica, and that piercing, haunting voice, singing old songs like "Heart of Gold" and "Powderfinger," and powerful new ones like "El Dorado" and one with a chorus that goes "Keep on rocking in the free world." It's a performance that puts a lot of bands with skyscraper sound systems to shame, and it's passionately up-to-date. The red-hot Maria McKee opens. (Palladium, 126 E. 14th St. 473-7171. Sept. 5-6 at 8.)

Jerry Garcia Band—If you take the time to blink after the recent round of Grateful Dead concerts in the area, you may miss this appearance by the Dead's burly lead guitarist, with a funky backup unit that's more uptown than outer space. The gospel-music producer Melvin Seals plays keyboards, two lovely ladies named Gloria Jones and Jackie LaBranch stand in for the choir, and the songs range from covers of Dylan, Van Morrison, and Los Lobos to Garcia originals. The Dead's rhythm guitarist, Bob Weir, will open the show, accompanied by the tasteful and lyrical bassist Rob Wasserman. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 587-9222. Sept. 6 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Sept. 7 at 7:30.)

Dion—Teen-ager in love, Belmonts front man, Lou Reed's idol—all this and Sue still gave him the runaround. Dion—a native of the Bronx and a newly minted member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—has saved his life twice by saying no: once to drugs and once to Buddy Holly, who had an extra seat on the plane. The singer continues his wanderings at the Beacon Theatre. (Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Aug. 31 at 8.)

Salsa and Merengue Concerts—Selected concerts from a series that will be on for about three weeks. Aug. 31 at 9: Tommy Olivencia, Louie Ramirez y la Super Banda, Orquesta Luz, and others. (Palladium, 126 E. 14th St.) . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 7: Celia Cruz, El Gran Combo, Papo Lucca y la Sonora Poncena, and others. (West Side Tennis Club, Forest Hills.) . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 9: Hermanos Rosario, Jossie Esteban y Petrulla 15, José Octavio y los Nietos, and others. (Palladium.) (For information about tickets for all three concerts, call 541-7352.)

Greenwich House—Aug. 29-30 at 8: "Peaces of Minds—A Jazz Drama," with Willie Williams, Christine Melton, Michele Hendricks, and others. . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 8: Armen Donelian. . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 8: The Michael DiSibio quartet. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 8: The Trudy Silver group. . . . At 9:30: The Matt Ship duo. . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 8: New York Strings, with Paquito d'Rivera. (27 Barrow St. Tickets at the door on the evenings of the concerts.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Oakland A's, Aug. 28-30 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the California Angels, Sept. 1-2 at 7:30, Sept. 3 at 1:30, and Sept. 4 at 1.

Mets—With four games left against N.L. East rival Chicago Cubs, these two, on Sept. 4 at 7:05, and Sept. 5 at 7:35, could be crucial. . . . ¶ So could these two, against the St. Louis Cardinals, Sept. 6 at 7:35 and Sept. 7 at 1:35.

Giants—Vs. the Pittsburgh Steelers, Sept. 2 at 8. This is the last preseason game.

(Home base for the Mets is Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499; for the Yankees, Yankee Stadium, 293-6000; and for the Giants, Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands, 1-201 935-8111.)

RACING

Horses—At Belmont: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1, starting Aug. 30. The Jerome Handicap is on Sept. 4. . . . At the Meadowlands: Sept. 4 at 1:30; weeknights at 7:30 starting Sept. 5. . . . At Monmouth Park, Oceanport, N.J.: Weekdays at 1:30. Through Sept. 2. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8 and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Mondays, except Sept. 4, through Saturdays at 7:45; Sept. 4 at 1:15.

CHAMPIONSHIPS—TENNIS

United States Open—U.S.T.A. National Tennis Center, Flushing Meadow. 1-718 271-5100. Aug. 28-29 at 11, Aug. 30-Sept. 3 at 11 and 7:35, Sept. 4 at 11, and Sept. 5-7 at 11 and 7:35. Through Sept. 10.

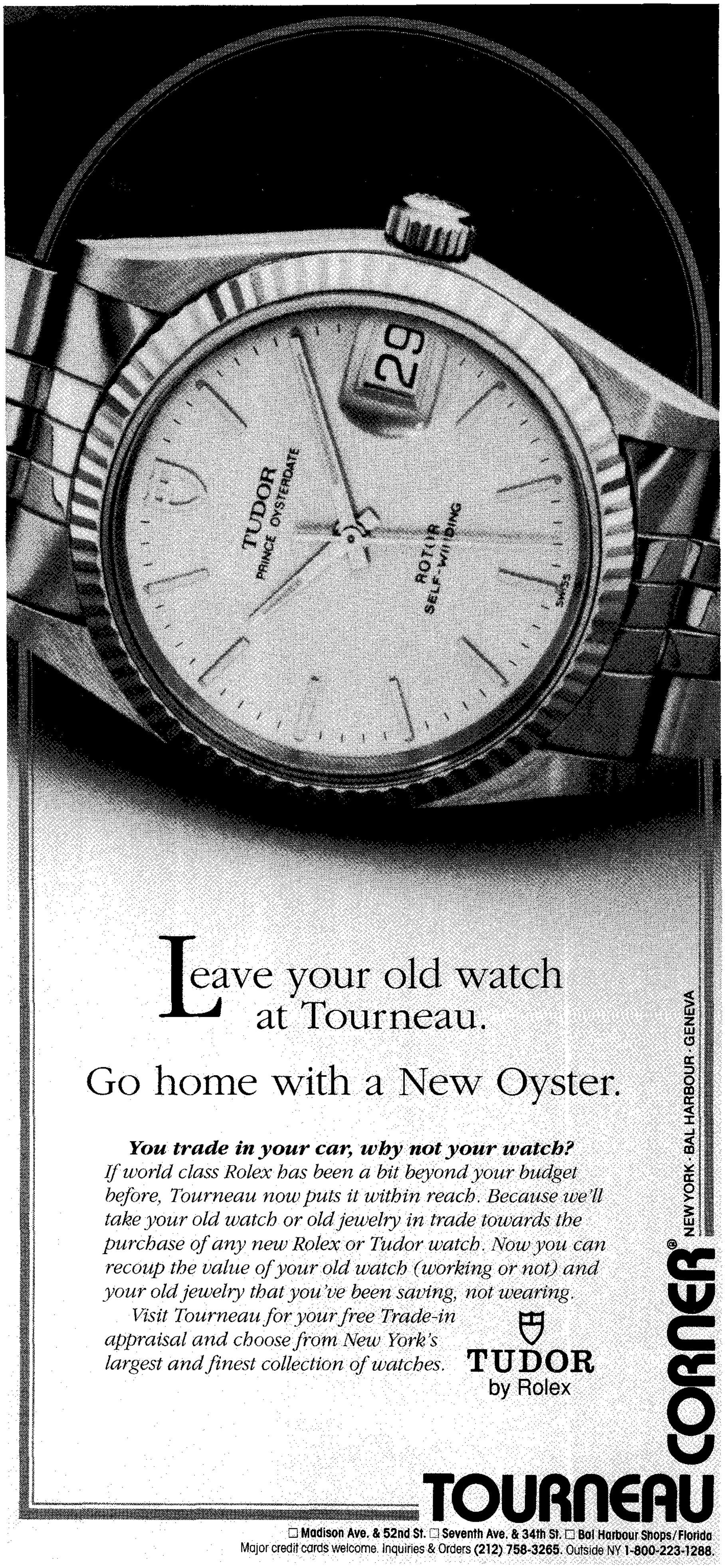
THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Wigstock—Like the Greenwich Village Halloween parade, this Labor Day cross-dressing spectacle—devoted to "hair peace"—is becoming as much a spectator as a participant affair, but that shouldn't stop such stars as Lady Bunny and Loretta B. De Mille from turning up to strut their elegant stuff. More than forty-five acts are scheduled to appear, including Ethyl Eichelberger, Phoebe Légère, and Sukhreet Gabel. (Tompkins Square Park. Sept. 4, from 1 to 9.)

Labor Day Weekend—Free concerts and fireworks at the South Street Seaport and other consolations with which to kiss the summer goodbye. On Sept. 3, for instance, the Marvelettes will be performing on the stage of Pier 16, at 1, 4, and 7. That evening, starting at 9:30, a half-hour fireworks display lights up New York Harbor. . . . **central park band shell**—Sept. 1 at 8:30: Yoshiko Chuma and the School of Hard Knocks, Merian Soto & Pepon Osorio, and Bobby Previte. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 3: Bo Diddley. . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 3: David Rudder, Tambu, and Charlie's Roots. (Mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . **prospect park band shell**—A weekend of African-Caribbean programs. Sept. 1 at 8: Professor Yaa-Lengi & African Contempo, and Nehesu. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 8: Kimati Dinizulu and his Kotoko Society, and Ladygourd Sangoma. . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 8: The Skatalites and Randy Grant's Dynasty. (No tickets necessary.) . . . **outdoor art**—The Washington Square Art Exhibit on the sidewalks of Greenwich Village, Sept. 2-4, from noon to sundown. . . . ¶ The Autumn Crafts Festival on Lincoln Center's Fordham University Plaza, Sept. 2, from 11 to 7. . . . ¶ The **labor day parade** will make its way up Fifth Avenue—from 44th Street to 72nd Street—beginning at 11 A.M. Rise and shine.

Cher—What does one of our finest film actresses do between jobs? Like the eight-hundred-pound gorilla, whatever she wants to do, which this summer is getting onstage with seven musicians, two backup singers, and seven dancers, changing from bluejeans and leather jacket to an enormous white fox coat or the infamous "masking-tape outfit," and wailing away with some of the most bombastic rock music ever heard outside of Atlantic City. All of which doesn't mean we wouldn't kill for front-row seats. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 31 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-516 221-1000.)

Diana Ross—What more is there to say? Jones Beach Theatre. Sept. 2 at 8. . . . ¶ Riverstage, Pier 84, Twelfth Ave. at 45th St. Sept. 4 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 757-3100.



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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

EAST SIDE

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171) "La Boca del Lobo" (1988, directed by Francisco Lombardi; a Peruvian film, in Spanish). Closed Mondays.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Batman" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Abyss" (†).
Theatre 3: "Cookie" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660) (Matinées only) "Cheetah" (Jeff Blyth), with Keith Coogan; and (evenings only) "Turner & Hooch" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Tom Hanks.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160) "The Abyss" (†).

Murray Hill, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548) "Batman" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "sex, lies, and videotape" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 29: "Let It Ride" (Joe Pytka), with Richard Dreyfuss, David Johansen, Teri Garr, and Allen Garfield. From Aug. 30: "Shirley Valentine" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Package" (Andrew Davis), with Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy, Tommy Lee Jones, and John Heard.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255) "Parenthood" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020) "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (†).

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411) "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262) "The Abyss" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320) "sex, lies, and videotape" (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Uncle Buck" (John Hughes), with John Candy and Amy Madigan.
Theatre 2: "Millennium" (Michael Anderson), with Kris Kristofferson and Cheryl Ladd.

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630) "Romero" (John Duigan), with Raul Julia.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Casualties of War" (†).
Theatre 2: "Parenthood" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Cookie" (†).
Theatre 2: "Batman" (†).
Theatre 3: "Distant Voices, Still Lives" (†).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Lock Up" (John Flynn), with Sylvester Stallone, Donald Sutherland, John Amos, Darlanne Fluegel, and Sonny Landham.
Theatre 2: "Wired" (Larry Peerce), with Michael Chiklis.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622) "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "The Package" (Andrew Davis), with Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy, Tommy Lee Jones, and John Heard.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 29: "Rude Awakening" (Aaron Russo and David Greenwalt), with Cheech Marin, Eric Roberts, Julie Hagerty, and Robert Carradine. From Aug. 30: "Relentless" (William Lustig), with Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, and Leo Rossi.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302) "Dead Poets Society" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313) Through Aug. 29: "Let It Ride" (Joe Pytka), with Richard Dreyfuss, David Johansen, Teri Garr, and Allen Garfield.
From Aug. 30: "Shirley Valentine" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100) "Parenthood" (†).

Loews Orpheum 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)
Theatre 1: "The Abyss" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 29: "A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child" (Stephen Hopkins), with Robert Englund. From Aug. 30: "Relentless" (William Lustig), with Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, and Leo Rossi.

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 24.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "Cheetah" (Jeff Blyth), with Keith Coogan; and (evenings only) "Do the Right Thing" (†).
Theatre 2: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).

WEST SIDE

Bleecker Street Cinema 1 and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)
Theatre 1: Aug. 28: "Veronika Voss" (1982, directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Rosel Zech; and "Despair" (1979, Fassbinder), with Dirk Bogarde and Andréa Ferréol. . . . ¶ Aug. 29: "Querelle" (1983, Fassbinder; in German), with Brad Davis, Franco Nero, and Jeanne Moreau; and "The Wizard of Babylon" (1983, Dieter Schidor; in German), a documentary on Fassbinder's filming of "Querelle." . . . ¶ Aug. 30-31: "The Marriage of Maria Braun" (1979, Fassbinder; in German), with Hanna Schygulla. . . . ¶ From Sept. 1: To be announced.
Theatre 2: "Chocolat" (†).

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).
Theatre 2: "sex, lies, and videotape" (†).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515) Through Aug. 29: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†). From Aug. 30: "Wired" (Larry Peerce), with Michael Chiklis.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 2: "Casualties of War" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "The Package" (Andrew Davis), with Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy, Tommy Lee Jones, and John Heard.
Theatre 2: "Getting It Right" (Randal Kleiser), with Jesse Birdsall.
Theatre 3: "The Navigator: An Odyssey Across Time" (Vincent Ward), with Bruce Lyons.
Theatre 4: "Dead Poets Society" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Cookie" (†).
Theatre 2: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Abyss" (†).
Theatre 4: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 5: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).
Theatre 6: "Casualties of War" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0600)
Theatre 1: "Do the Right Thing" (†).
Theatre 2: "Uncle Buck" (John Hughes), with John Candy and Amy Madigan.
Theatre 3: "Millennium" (Michael Anderson), with Kris Kristofferson and Cheryl Ladd.

Worldwide Cinemas, 49th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).
Theatre 2: "Do the Right Thing" (†).
Theatre 3: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 4: "Casualties of War" (†).
Theatre 5: "Casualties of War" (†).
Theatre 6: "Uncle Buck" (John Hughes), with John Candy and Amy Madigan.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406) "Dead Poets Society" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600) "The Abyss" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856) Through Aug. 29: "Cheetah" (Jeff Blyth), with Keith Coogan.
From Aug. 30: "The Wizard of Oz" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360) "Cookie" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520) "Romero" (John Duigan), with Raul Julia.

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131) Through Aug. 31: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†). From Sept. 1: "Weapons of the Spirit" (Pierre Sauvage), a documentary.

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013) "A Chorus of Disapproval" (Michael Winner), with Anthony Hopkins and Jeremy Irons.

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959) (Matinées only) "The Adventures of Milo and Otis" (Masanori Hata); and (evenings only) "Do the Right Thing" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070) Through Aug. 29: "Dead Poets Society" (†). From Aug. 30: "Shirley Valentine" (†).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Four Adventures of Reinette and Mirabelle" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Little Thief" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Music Teacher" (Gérard Corbiau; in French).

Cinema Studio 1 and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)
Theatre 1: "sex, lies, and videotape" (†).
Theatre 2: "sex, lies, and videotape" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700) "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Batman" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 29: "Let It Ride" (Joe Pytka), with Richard Dreyfuss, David Johansen, Teri Garr, and Allen Garfield. From Aug. 30: "Dead Poets Society" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 29: "Lock Up" (John Flynn), with Sylvester Stallone, Donald Sutherland, John Amos, Darlanne Fluegel, and Sonny Landham. From Aug. 30: "Relentless" (William Lustig), with Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, and Leo Rossi.
Theatre 4: "The Package" (Andrew Davis), with Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy, Tommy Lee Jones, John Heard, Dennis Franz, Pam Grier, and Kevin Crowley.
Theatre 5: Through Aug. 29: "Lethal Weapon 2." From Aug. 30: "Relentless."
Theatre 6: "Cookie" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 2: "Millennium" (Michael Anderson), with Kris Kristofferson and Cheryl Ladd.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "The Abyss" (†).
Theatre 2: "Casualties of War" (†).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Batman" (†).
Theatre 2: "Wired" (directed by Larry Peerce), with Michael Chiklis.
Theatre 3: "Cookie" (†).
Theatre 4: "Millennium" (Michael Anderson), with Kris Kristofferson and Cheryl Ladd.
Theatre 5: "Let It Ride" (Joe Pytka), with Richard Dreyfuss, David Johansen, Teri Garr, and Allen Garfield.
Theatre 6: "Lock Up" (John Flynn), with Sylvester Stallone, Donald Sutherland, John Amos, Darlanne Fluegel, and Sonny Landham.

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494) "The Package" (Andrew Davis), with Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy, Tommy Lee Jones, John Heard, Dennis Franz, Pam Grier, and Kevin Crowley.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 2: "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (†).
Theatre 3: "Turner & Hooch" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Tom Hanks; and "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" (†).
Theatre 4: "Cheetah" (Jeff Blyth), with Keith Coogan.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St at B'way. (869-8340)
Through Aug. 29: "A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child" (Stephen Hopkins), with Robert Englund.
From Aug. 30: "Relentless" (William Lustig), with Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, and Leo Rossi.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 2: "Casualties of War" (†).

Warner, 7th Ave. between 42nd and 43rd. (764-6760)
Through Aug. 31: "Uncle Buck" (John Hughes), with John Candy and Amy Madigan.
From Sept. 1: "A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child" (Stephen Hopkins), with Robert Englund.

West Side Cinema I and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)

Theatre 1: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).

Theatre 2: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)

Aug. 28: "A Damsel in Distress" (1937, directed by George Stevens), with Fred Astaire, Joan Fontaine, and Burns and Allen; and "Ship Ahoy" (1942, Eddie Buzzell), with Eleanor Powell.

Aug. 29-30: "Way Out West" (1937, James Horne), with Laurel and Hardy and James Finlayson; and "Go West" (1925, Buster Keaton; silent), with Keaton and Kathleen Myers.

Aug. 31: "Life Begins in College" (1937, William A. Seiter), with the Ritz Brothers, Joan Davis, Tony Martin, Nat Pendleton, and Fred Stone; and "Thanks a Million" (1935, Roy Del Ruth), with Dick Powell, Fred Allen, Ann Dvorak, Patsy Kelly, and Paul Whiteman and his orchestra.

Sept. 1-2: "Sherlock Jr." (†); and "Movie Crazy" (1932, Clyde Bruckman), with Harold Lloyd.

Sept. 3-4: "Seven Chances" (†); and "Sons of the Desert" (1933, William A. Seiter), with Laurel and Hardy, Charley Chase, and Mae Busch.

Sept. 5-6: "Two Girls and a Sailor" (1944, Richard Thorpe), with Gloria De Haven, Van Johnson, June Allyson, Jimmy Durante, Gracie Allen, José Iturbi, Lena Horne, Virginia O'Brien, and Ben Blue; and "Best Foot Forward" (1943, Edward Buzzell), with Lucille Ball, William Gaxton, Virginia Weidler, June Allyson, Nancy Walker, and Gloria De Haven.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)

Through Aug. 29: "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (1981, Steven Spielberg), with Harrison Ford and Karen Allen; and "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" (1984, Spielberg), with Ford, Kate Capshaw, and Ke Kuy Quan.

Aug. 30-31: "The Accidental Tourist" (1988, Lawrence Kasdan), with William Hurt, Kathleen Turner, Geena Davis, Amy Wright, Ed Begley, Jr., David Ogden Stiers, Bill Pullman, and Robert Gorman; and "Beaches" (1988, Garry Marshall), with Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey.

Sept. 1-2: "Torch Song Trilogy" (1988, Paul Bogart), with Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein, and Brian Kerwin; and "La Cage aux Folles" (1979, Edouard Molinaro; in French), with Ugo Tognazzi, Michel Serrault, and Michel Galabru.

Sept. 3: "The Blue Angel" (1929, Josef von Sternberg; in German), with Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings, and Hans Albers; and "Anathan" (†).

Sept. 4-5: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud; and "Jules and Jim" (1962, Truffaut; in French), with Jeanne Moreau, Oskar Werner, and Henri Serre.

From Sept. 6: "True Believer" (†); and "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, Cybill Shepherd, and Jodie Foster.

Film Forum I, 57 Watts St. (431-1590)

Through Aug. 29: "Cannibal Tours" (1989, Dennis O'Rourke), a documentary.

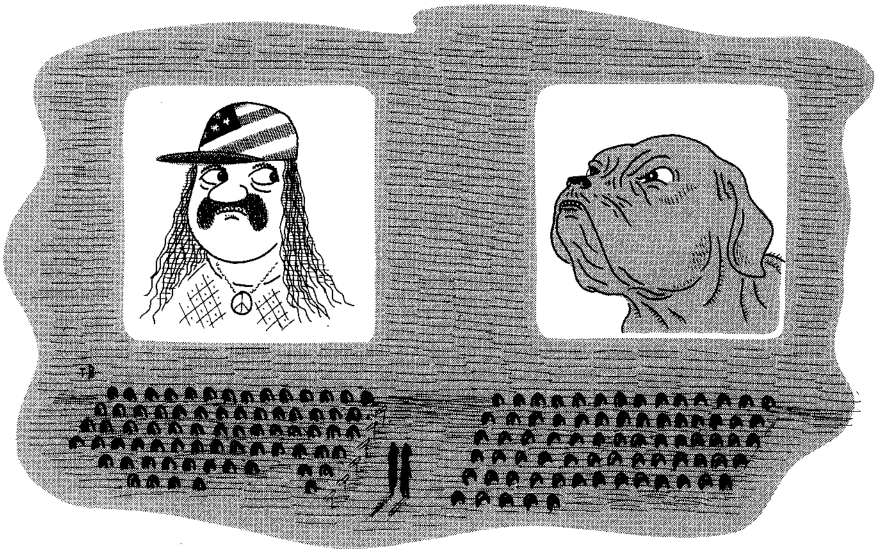
Aug. 30: "The Mask of Fu Manchu" (1932, Charles Brabin and Charles Vidor), with Boris Karloff, Lewis Stone, and Myrna Loy; and "Mad Love" (1935, Karl Freund), with Peter Lorre, Frances Drake, Colin Clive, Ted Healy, and Edward Brophy.

Aug. 31: "The Wasp Woman" (1959, Roger Corman), with Susan Cabot, Fred (Anthony) Eisley, Barboura Morris, and Michael Mark; "The Giant Claw" (1957, Fred F. Sears), with Jeff Morrow, Mara Corday, Morris Ankrum, and Robert Shayne; "Sins of the Fleshapoids" (1965, Mike Kuchar), with Bob Cowan; "Ascension of the Demonoids" (1986, George Kuchar); and "Midnight Movie Massacre" (1989, Mike Stock).

Sept. 1-2: "Eraserhead" (†); and "They Came from Within" (1976, David Cronenberg), with Paul Hampton, Joe Silver, Lynn Lowry, and Barbara Steele.

Sept. 3-4: "Freaks" (†); "The Ghoul" (1933, T. Hayes Hunter) with Boris Karloff, Ernest Thesiger, Cedric Hardwicke, and Ralph Richardson; and "Maniac" (1935, Dwain Esper), with Bill Woods and Horace Carpenter.

From Sept. 5: Theatre closed.



Cheech and Hooch

Film Forum 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590)

Aug. 28: "Chandu the Magician" (1932, William C. Menzies), with Bela Lugosi and Edmund Lowe; and "Just Imagine" (1930, David Butler), with El Brendel, Maureen O'Sullivan, John Garrick, Mischa Auer, and Frank Albertson.

Aug. 29-30: "20 Million Miles to Earth" (1957, Nathan Juran), with William Hopper and Joan Taylor; and "Mysterious Island" (1961, Cy Endfield), with Michael Craig, Joan Greenwood, Michael Callan, Herbert Lom, and Gary Merrill.

Aug. 31: "The Cosmic Monsters" (1957, Gilbert Gunn) with Forrest Tucker, Martin Benson and Gaby André; and "The Cosmic Man" (1959, Herbert Greene), with John Carradine, Bruce Bennett, Angela Greene, Lynn Osborne, and Jean Hagen.

Sept. 1-2: "Plan 9 from Outer Space" (1956, Edward D. Wood, Jr.), with Bela Lugosi; "Hideous Sun Demon" (1985, Robert Clarke and Craig Mitchell); and "Cat Women of the Moon" (1954, Arthur Hilton), with Marie Windsor, Sonny Tufts, and Victor Jory.

Sept. 3: "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (1932†); and "The Undying Monster" (1942, John Brahm).

Sept. 4: "Twilight of the Cockroaches" (1987, Hiroaki Yoshida); and "The H-Man" (1959, Inoshiro Honda), with Yumi Shirakawa.

From Sept. 5: Theatre closed.

Thalia SoHo, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)

Aug. 28: "The Final Extra" (1927, James P. Hogan; silent), with Mervyn LeRoy and Marguerita De La Motte; and "The Dancer's Peril" (1917, Travers Vale; silent), with Alice Brady and Montagu Love.

Aug. 29: "Lean on Me" (1989, John G. Avildsen), with Morgan Freeman; and "Stand and Deliver" (1988, Ramon Menendez), with Edward James Olmos and Lou Diamond Phillips.

Aug. 30: "The Naked Gun" (1988, David Zucker), with Leslie Nielsen, Priscilla Presley, and Ricardo Montalban; "Airplane!" (1980, Jerry Zucker, David Zucker, and Jim Abrahams), with Robert Hays and Julie Hagerty; and "Top Secret" (1984, Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, and Jerry Zucker), with Val Kilmer.

Aug. 31: "The Draughtsman's Contract" (†); and "Betrayal" (1983, David Jones), with Jeremy Irons, Ben Kingsley, and Patricia Hodge.

Sept. 1-2: "Pink Flamingos" (1974, John Waters), with Divine; and two short films—"Divine Waters" (1983, Vito Zagarrio), a documentary about Waters; and "The Diane Linkletter Show" (Waters).

Sept. 3: "The Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French), with Marcel Dalio and Nora Gregor; and "The Earrings of Madame de . . ." (1953, Max Ophuls; in French), with Charles Boyer and Danielle Darrieux.

Sept. 4-5: "Point Blank" (1967, John Boorman), with Lee Marvin; "The Friends of Eddie Coyle" (1973, Peter Yates), with Robert Mitchum; and "Thieves' Highway" (1949, Jules Dassin), with Richard Conte.

From Sept. 6: To be announced.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Aug. 28: "Forbidden Games" (1952, René Clément; in French), with Brigitte Fossey and Georges Poujouly; and "Gervaise" (1956, Clément; in French), with Maria Schell, François Périer, Suzy Delair, and Armand Mestral.

Aug. 29: "League of Frightened Men" (1937, Alfred E. Green), with Walter Connolly, Irene Hervey, Lionel Stander, and Eduardo Ciannelli; and "Meet Nero Wolfe" (1936, Herbert Biberman), with Edward Arnold, Lionel Stander, Joan Perry, Rita Hayworth, and Victor Jory.

Aug. 30: "Whistle Down the Wind" (1961, Bryan Forbes), with Hayley Mills, Bernard Lee, and Alan Bates; and "The Spirit of the Beehive" (1973, Victor Erice; in Spanish), with Ana Torrent.

Aug. 31: "Performance" (1970, Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg), with Mick Jagger and James Fox; and "Don't Look Now" (1973, Roeg), with Julie Christie, Donald Sutherland, Hilary Mason, and Stanley Meadows.

Sept. 1-2: "Double Indemnity" (1944, Billy Wilder), with Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray, and Edward G. Robinson; and "Sorry, Wrong Number" (†).

Sept. 3: "Amarcord" (1974, Federico Fellini; in Italian), with Bruno Zanin, Megali Noel, and Pupella Maggio; and "The Conformist" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda.

Sept. 4: "Young and Innocent" ("The Girl Was Young"; 1937, Alfred Hitchcock), with Derrick de Marney, Nova Pilbeam, Basil Radford, Percy Marmont, and Mary Clare; and "Murder" (†).

Sept. 5: "Sawdust and Tinsel" (†); and "Monika" (1952, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Harriet Andersson, Lars Ekborg, and John Harryson.

Sept. 6: "Dangerous" (1936, Alfred E. Green), with Bette Davis, Franchot Tone, Margaret Lindsay, and Alison Skipworth; and "Dancing Lady" (1933, Robert Z. Leonard), with Fred Astaire, Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone, Clark Gable, Nelson Eddy, and May Robson.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Hollywood films made in 1939. Aug. 28 at 2:30: "Ninotchka" (directed by Ernst Lubitsch), with Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas, and Ina Claire. . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 6: "The Flying Deuces" (Edward A. Sutherland), with Laurel and Hardy. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 2:30: "Dark Victory" (Edmund Goulding), with Bette Davis, George Brent, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Humphrey Bogart, and Ronald Reagan. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 6: "Wuthering Heights" (William Wyler), with Merle Oberon, Laurence Olivier, Flora Robson, David Niven, and Geraldine Fitzgerald. . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 2:30: "The Flying Deuces." . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 6:

MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

"Dark Victory." . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 2:30: "Jesse James" (Henry King), with Tyrone Power, Henry Fonda, and Nancy Kelly. . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 6: "Drums Along the Mohawk" (John Ford), with Claudette Colbert, Henry Fonda, and Edna May Oliver. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 2: "Juarez" (William Dieterle), with Paul Muni, Bette Davis, and Brian Aherne. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 5: "Dodge City" (Michael Curtiz), with Errol Flynn, Olivia De Havilland, and Ann Sheridan. . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 2: "Drums Along the Mohawk." . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 5: "Jesse James." . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 2:30: "Juarez." . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 6: "One Third of a Nation" (Dudley Murphy), with Sylvia Sidney, Leif Erickson, and Sidney Lumet. . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 2:30: "Rose of Washington Square" (Gregory Ratoff), with Power, Alice Faye, and Al Jolson. . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 6: "Golden Boy" (Rouben Mamoulian), with Barbara Stanwyck, William Holden, and Adolphe Menjou.

Museum of Broadcasting, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—"MB Playhouse," a chance to see the television dramas you may have missed in the past thirty years. Aug. 29-Sept. 2: Dorothy Parker's "Big Blonde" (1980, PBS), with Sally Kellerman. . . . From Sept. 5: Wendy Wasserstein's "Uncommon Women and Others" (1978, PBS), with Swoosie Kurtz, Meryl Streep, Ann McDonough, and Jill Eikenberry. Showings Tuesdays at 3 and 6 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 3. . . . ¶ Comedies seen on cable. Aug. 29-Sept. 2: "First and Ten" (1986), with Delta Burke; and "Brothers" (1986). . . . From Sept. 5: "Alas Smith and Jones" (1986, BBC), with Mel Smith and Griff Rhys Jones; and "Yes, Prime Minister" (1986, BBC), with Nigel Hawthorne. Showings Tuesdays at 12:15 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 12:15. . . . ¶ Aug. 29-Sept. 2: "Cinderella" (1957, Ralph Nelson; CBS), with Julie Andrews, Howard Lindsay, Dorothy Stickney, Ilka Chase, Edie Adams, Alice Ghostley, and Kaye Ballard. Music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. Showings Tuesday at 2:30 and 6:30 and Wednesday through Saturday at 2:30. . . . ¶ Shows produced and directed by Gary Smith and Dwight Hemion. Aug. 29-Sept. 2: "Liberty Weekend '86: Opening Ceremonies" (1986, ABC), with Shirley MacLaine, Neil Diamond, and Ronald Reagan; and "Christmas in Washington" (1982, NBC), with Diahann Carroll, Barbara Mandrell, Dinah Shore, and Ben Vereen. . . . *From* Sept. 5: "Color Me Barbra" (1966, CBS) and "Barbra Streisand: One Voice" (1986, HBO). Showings Tuesdays through Saturdays at 1.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 36th St. at 35th Ave., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—Aug. 30 at 2:30: "Hollywood Roundup" (1937), with Buck Jones, Grant Withers, Helen Twelvetrees, and Shemp Howard. . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 2:30: "The Talk of Hollywood" (1929, Mark Sandrich), with Nat Carr and Fay Marbe. . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 2:30: "Star Dust" (1940, Walter Lang), with Linda Darnell. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 1: "Hollywood Boulevard" (1936, Robert Florey), with John Halliday. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 3: "Hollywood Boulevard" (1976, Joe Dante, Allan Arkush, and Jon Davison), with Mary Woronov. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 5: "The Day of the Locust" (1975, John Schlesinger), with Donald Sutherland, Karen Black, and Burgess Meredith. . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 1: "The Star" (1952, Stuart Heisler), with Bette Davis, Sterling Hayden, and Natalie Wood. . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 3: "Hollywood Boulevard" (1976). . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 5: "The Day of the Locust." . . . ¶ Sept. 6 at 2:30: "The Star."

Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. (662-2133)—Aug. 31 at 8: "Safety Last" (1923, Sam Taylor; silent), with Harold Lloyd. Organ accompaniment written and played by Lee Erwin.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty.)

The Abyss—With Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Michael Biehn; directed by James Cameron. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Bay Cinema, Gotham Cinema, Loews Orpheum, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Olympia.)

Anatahan (1952)—Josef von Sternberg's last film; he did not, regrettably, go out in glory. He wrote the screenplay and directed, photographed, and narrated this story, which was shot in a Japanese studio and is based on an actual incident involving a group of Japanese soldiers who were castaways for seven years on a tiny Pacific island during and after the Second World War. However, as he tells it, the men's battles over a sulky, lusting femme fatale called Keiko (Akemi Negishi, who is photographed as if she were Marlene Dietrich in a thirties Paramount swampy jungle) are so pointless and unbelievable that you barely react as they kill one another off. The island has so many dead trees, shining leaves, and writhing shadows that you just want to get out of there.—P.K. (Cinema Village; Sept. 3.)

Batman—Tim Burton's powerfully glamorous comic-book epic, with sets angled and lighted like film noir, goes beyond pulp. It has a funky, nihilistic charge, and an eerie, poetic intensity. Michael Keaton is the fabulously wealthy Bruce Wayne, who patrols the sinister nighttime canyons of Gotham City in the guise of Batman, and Jack Nicholson is the sniggering mobster Jack Napier, who turns into the leering madman the Joker. The two are fighting for the soul of the city that spawned them. The movie is underwritten, but it has so many unpredictable spins that what's missing doesn't seem to matter much. It's mean and anarchic and blissful. Written by Sam Hamm, Warren Skaaren (and uncredited others), based on characters created by Bob Kane. With cinematography by Roger Pratt; design by Anton Furst; costumes by Bob Ringwood; a plangent score by Danny Elfman; and songs by Prince. The cast includes Jack Palance, Kim Basinger, Jerry Hall, and Robert Wuhl.—P.K. (Reviewed in our issue of 7/10/89.) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Murray Hill, Cinema II, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Casualties of War—A great, intense movie about war and rape, based on a Vietnam incident of 1966 that was reported in this magazine (October 18, 1969) by the late Daniel Lang. He gave an emotionally devastating account of the actions of a squad of five American soldiers who kidnapped a Vietnamese village girl, raped her, and then covered up their crime by killing her. One of the five men refused to take part in the rape, and, despite threats and attempts on his life, forced the Army to bring the other four to trial. He's the one who suffers from guilt: he can't forgive himself for his inability to save the girl's life. Directed by Brian De Palma, the movie has the purity of films such as "Grand Illusion" and "Shoeshine"; it's the culmination of his best work. Sean Penn gives a daring performance as the squad's twenty-year-old leader; Michael J. Fox is impressive as the soldier who can't keep quiet; Thuy Thu Le is the dazed, battered girl who haunts the movie long before she's dead. Also with Erik King as Brownie, John Leguizamo as Diaz, John C. Reilly as Hatcher, Don Harvey as Clark, Ving Rhames as Lt. Reilly, and Sam Robards as the chaplain. The adaptation (too explicit in a few places) is by David Rabe; the cinematography is by Stephen H. Burum; the music is by Ennio Morricone.—P.K. (8/21/89) (Baronet, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, Olympia, and National Twin.)

Emily Lloyd in "Cookie"

Chocolat—Whatever Claire Denis's first feature is supposed to be about, it proves, at least, that the English don't have a monopoly on swanky colonial torpor. The movie is constructed as an extended flashback: a young Frenchwoman (named France) travelling in Africa remembers her fifties girlhood in a remote outpost of Cameroon, where her father was a district officer. Most of this story consists of smoldering looks exchanged by the girl's beautiful mother (Giulia Boschi) and the family's handsome African "boy," Protée (Isaach de Bankolé). When Maman feels herself becoming too hot and bothered at the sight of the noble black man, she brusquely orders him to fetch something; Protée deals with his frustration by taking a lot of showers. Nothing actually happens. In denying him any kind of release for his pent-up desire, Denis encourages us to think she's making a political point. What she's really doing is dehumanizing him—treating him as a gleaming hunk whose anger and wounded reserve just make him more exotically alluring. "Chocolat" looks pretty good, but it's merde in a fancy wrapper. In French.—T.R. (Bleecker Street Cinema.)

Cookie—With Peter Falk and Emily Lloyd, directed by Susan Seidelman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Cinema I, Chelsea Cinemas, 57th St. Playhouse, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Dead Poets Society—Robin Williams gives an astonishingly empathic performance as an eager, dedicated prep-school teacher in the late fifties. This teacher talks to his boys about the passions expressed in poetry and helps them release their creative impulses. But one of the boys, soaring on his new confidence, lacks the shrewdness and courage to deal with his rigid, uncomprehending father, and makes a disastrous choice. Directed by Peter Weir, from a script by Thomas Schulman, the picture draws out the obvious and turns itself into a classic. Weir, it appears, is more interested in the elegiac than in the dramatic. Like his "Gallipoli," this film has a gold ribbon attached to it. With Robert Sean Leonard, Ethan Hawke, Josh Charles, Gale Hansen, and Kurtwood Smith and Norman Lloyd.—P.K. (6/26/89) (68th St. Playhouse, Quad Cinema, and Guild. . . . ¶ Loews Paramount; through Aug. 29. . . . ¶ Loews 84th Street Sixplex; starting Aug. 30.)

Distant Voices, Still Lives—With Freda Dowie and Peter Postlethwaite, directed by Terence Davies. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1932)—Fredric March goes in for hilarious makeup that includes a change in the shape of his skull and an alarming number of huge teeth, and his rampaging Hyde is so exuberantly athletic he seems to be modelled on Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. The director, Rouben Mamoulian, rather overdoes the pseudo-science at the beginning, but at some levels this story seems to work in every version, and this one, set in a starched mid-Victorian environment, suggests the lust that has to come out—and the attraction of the gutter. With Miriam Hopkins, shiny-eyed with sexual mischief, as the trollop, and Rose Hobart.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 3.)

Do the Right Thing—The third feature by Spike Lee takes place in the black neighborhood of

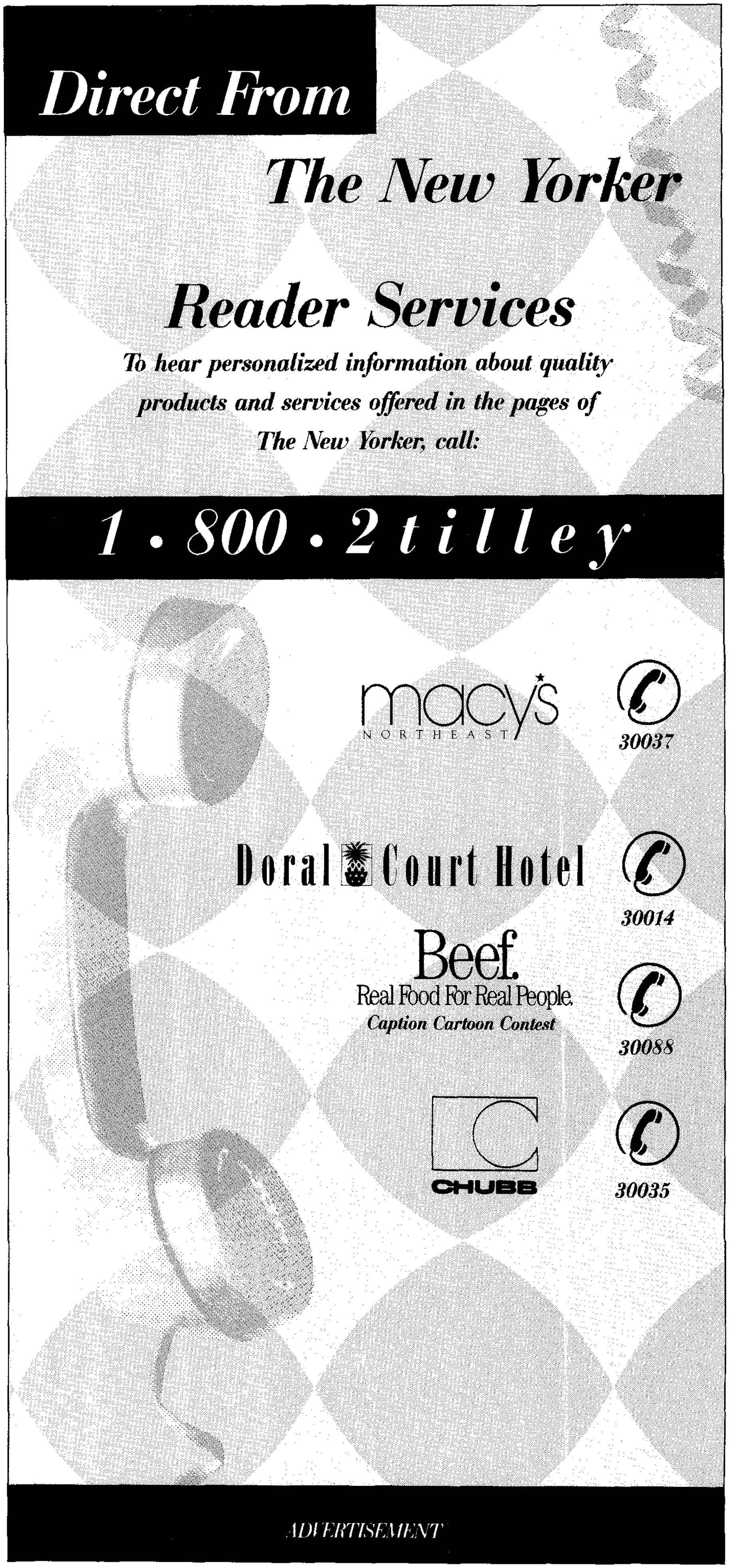
Ingmar Bergman's "Monika" (playing September 5 at Theatre 80 St. Marks) stars the thrillingly uninhibited and skillful Harriet Andersson as a sensual working-class woman who romances and marries a bourgeois youth named Harry. Released in 1953—before Bergman became an international art-house name—it's a sexy, fresh, sorrowful movie about a teen-age woman's uncontrollable urge to escape a constricted life, and the romantic disillusionment of her husband.

Monika (who toils at a vegetable stall) sees Harry (who works at a glassware and china shop) as a relief from the usual brutes; her head stuffed with movie-bred fantasies, she hopes Harry will rescue her from the cramped quarters she shares with a drunken father, a harried mother, and a brood of small, noisy siblings. For a summer, that's just what Harry does. He takes her island-hopping in the Stockholm archipelago, where the couple live like the Swedish Family Robinson. (You can guess what happens when the fun runs out.)

While the movie's story line is unbecomingly modest, the performances and textures are startling and alive. Lars Ekborg imbues the potentially negligible role of Harry with a fibre that saves the character from pathos. Andersson's Monika is a frank, contemporary woman who wants to be mistress of her fate. She's defeated partly by her own aberrant impulses. In a prolonged closeup—Godard called it "the saddest shot in the history of the cinema"—she stares down Bergman's camera before she beds another man. Her audacious expression is confounding: a portrait of a woman without shackles, but also without scruples.

Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, on a punishingly hot day; the focus of the action is a pizzeria, Sal's Famous, which is apparently the last white-owned business on the block; and the climax is a riot sparked by a monstrous act of police brutality. At its most basic, Lee's intention is to demonstrate how in a racially polarized society the slow accumulation of small irritations can swell to something huge and ugly and lethal. It's a solid idea for a movie, and initially the picture provides its share of incidental pleasures. And, although most of the many characters Lee shows us are types, at least there are a lot of different ones, and their encounters are often funny. But Lee goes wrong by pushing his material to a "powerful" climax, a Scorsese-like explosion of violence: he sacrifices political clarity for the sake of the big statement. He's nimble-witted and passionate, but his movie seems to shout at us rather than speak to us. In addition to writing, producing, and directing, Lee plays the pivotal role of Mookie, the pizza deliveryman. Others in the cast are Danny Aiello (as Sal), Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Giancarlo Esposito, Bill Nunn, Rosie Perez, Joie Lee, John Turturro, and Richard Edson; as a trio of middle-aged street-corner philosophers, Paul Benjamin, Frankie Faison, and Robin Harris are responsible for the movie's best, loosest scenes.—T.R. (7/24/89) (23rd St. West Triplex, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin, and Cinema 3. Evenings only.)

THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (1983)—Set on an English estate in the summer of 1694, this formalist tease by the writer-director Peter Greenaway is a fantasia of conceits about



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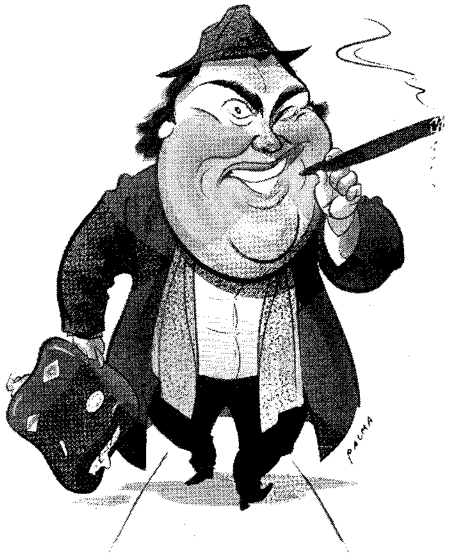
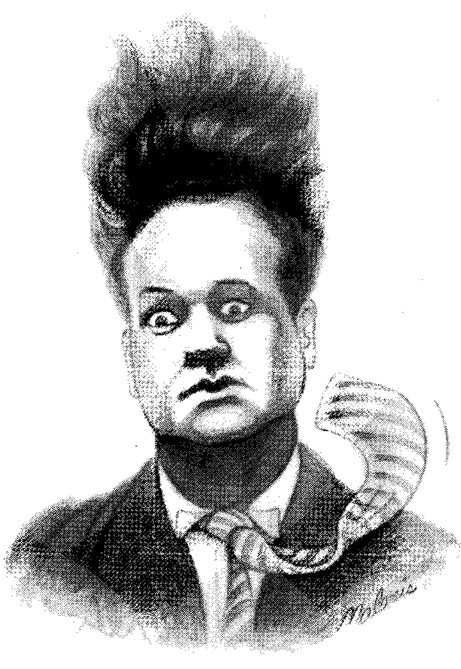
perspective, and about the relationship between the artist, his art, and the world. It's also a victimization fantasy: the draughtsman (Anthony Higgins), a lover of landscape, is attacked and destroyed by those who love only property. The film is mannered and idiosyncratic; the speeches are so arch and twitty they seem to be pitched higher than a dog whistle, and the people talking are popinjays in perukes shaped as geometrically as the shrubs at Marienbad. The impishness congeals, because there's no dramatic motor in the sequences. For Greenaway, a movie is a set of theorems to be demonstrated by tableaux. His mind may be active but his camera is dead. With Janet Suzman and Anne Louise Lambert.—P.K. (Thalia SoHo; Aug. 31.)

Eraserhead (1977)—David Lynch, who had made short films during his student days at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, worked for five years in Los Angeles to complete this first feature, which was shot (mostly at night) in 35-mm. black and white. He was the writer, the director, and the set designer, and was also responsible for the wonderfully grubby special effects. He seems to have reinvented the experimental-film movement; watching this daringly irrational movie, with its interest in dream logic, you almost feel that you're seeing a European avant-garde gothic of the twenties or early thirties. Lynch pulls you inside wormy states of anxiety. Time seems completely still while the hero, Henry (John Nance), whose hair stands on end, as if permanently shocked, in an Afro pompadour that's squared off—it suggests an eraser on the head of a pencil—moves through streets reminiscent of the ones Peter Lorre sidled through in Fritz Lang's "M." Henry appears to come out of the viewer's subconscious; he experiences a man's worst fears of courtship and marriage and fatherhood (to a whimpering monster). The slow, strange rhythm is very unsettling and takes some getting used to, but it's an altogether amazing, sensuous film. There is perhaps nothing else in contemporary films that is as eerily erotic as the moment when Henry commits adultery with the girl from across the hall and the two lovers deliquesce into their bed—disappearing in the fluid, with only the woman's hair left floating on top. The cast includes Judith Roberts, Charlotte Stewart, Laurel Near, and Jack Fisk as the deus ex machina.—P.K. (Film Forum 1; Sept. 1-2.)



John Candy in "Uncle Buck"

Four Adventures of Reinette and Mirabelle—Eric Rohmer's latest picture doesn't belong to his "Comedies and Proverbs" cycle, and it isn't the beginning of a new series, either. It's not much of anything, actually—just a quartet of sketches about a country girl (Joëlle Miquel) and a city girl (Jessica Forde). Most of it was shot, in 16 mm., while Rohmer and his crew were waiting to film the "green ray" effect for his 1987 "Summer"; this movie was conceived as a diversion, an agreeable time killer, and it's very, very slight. The first episode, "The Blue Hour," which takes place in the country, is the most satisfying: an elegant little essay on natural sounds and the value of silence. The remaining three—set in Paris, where Reinette and Mirabelle share an apartment—are no more than anecdotes: casual, graceful, and utterly trivial. Also with Fabrice Luchini, Philippe Laudenbach, Marie Riviere, and Béatrice Romand. In French.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza.)



John Nance in "Eraserhead"

Freaks (1932)—The original ads quoted Louella Parsons, who said, "For pure sensationalism 'Freaks' tops any picture yet produced." She wasn't far off, and it's still a shocker. Though this circus story, directed by Tod Browning, is superficially sympathetic to the maimed and the mindless that it features, it uses images of physical deformity for their enormous potential of horror, and at the end, when the pinheads and the armless and legless creatures scurry about to revenge themselves on a normal woman (Olga Baclanova), the film becomes a true nightmare. If this film were a silent it might be harder to shake off, but the naïve, sentimental talk helps us keep our distance. With Leila Hyams, Wallace Ford, Harry and Daisy Earles, Johnny Eck (who had half a torso), Randion (known as the Living Torso), the Siamese twins Daisy and Violet Hilton, and Henry Victor as the strong man. Adapted from the story "Spurs," by Tod Robbins.—P.K. (Film Forum 1; Sept. 3-4.)

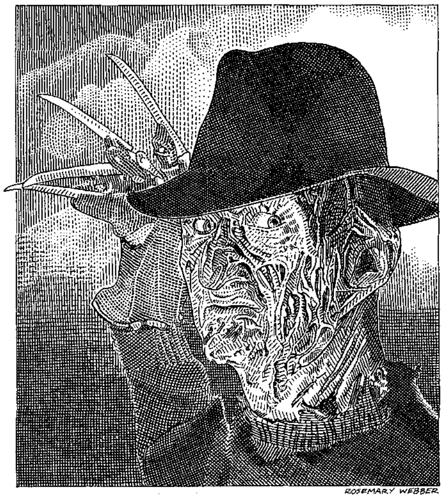
Honey, I Shrunk the Kids—A contraption invented by a suburban nerd scientist (Rick Moranis) cuts both his kids and the neighbors' down to size: a quarter of an inch. Unaware of what has happened, and unable to hear their pipsqueak cries, Dad sweeps them into a dustpan, dumps them in a garbage bag, and hauls the bag out to the curb. The kids have to make their way back to the house across the (not very recently mowed) lawn—a long trek for tiny, tiny legs. There are adventures, of course, engineered by the sort of special effects "magic" that probably even the youngest audiences have learned by now to dread. The real surprise of this movie—which was directed by Joe Johnston, an effects specialist from Industrial Light & Magic, and which carries an immense list of technical credits (including a "Scorpion Crew," a "Bee Sequence Crew," and a "Stop Motion Ant Crew")—is that it's friendly, good-humored, and unpretentious. Johnston manages to scale down not only the kids but also the movie's sense of its own importance. Also with Matt Frewer, Marcia Strassman, and Kristine Sutherland; Jared Rushton, Amy O'Neill, Thomas Brown, and Robert Oliveri are the kids. The imaginative cinematography is by Hiro Narita—T.R. (Embassy.)

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—This mediocre third film in the Indiana Jones trilogy—a reprise of the first, "Raiders of the Lost Ark"—is a mixture of cliffhanger and anti-Nazi thriller and religious spectacle. It's enjoyable, but familiar, and the action lacks the exhilarating, leaping precision that the director, Steven Spielberg, is famous for. The only real spin is in the slapstick teamwork of Harrison Ford, as the archeologist-adventurer Indy, and Sean Connery, as Indy's father, a medievalist who's too engrossed in his studies to pay much attention to his daredevil son's triumphs. With River Phoenix playing Indy as a boy, Alison Doody, Denholm Elliott, John Rhys-Davies, and Julian Glover. The screenplay, by Jeffrey Boam, is based on a story devised by the producer George Lucas and Menno Meyjes.—P.K. (6/12/89) (Eastside Cinema, and Embassy.)

Lethal Weapon 2—Chases, explosions, fights, barrages of insults, the odd moment of manly sentimentality—these are the standard elements of American action movies in the eighties, and the "Lethal Weapon" movies use them with an amazing lack of shame. There's lots of comedy, but no real relief: the punch lines slam into our brains like cars into plate-glass windows. The only thing that makes this movie at all distinctive is its hero, a reckless L.A. cop named Riggs, a role that allows Mel Gibson to zip through the picture like a free electron. Riggs isn't actually trying to kill himself this time (as he was in the first movie), but he's still a wild man and Gibson is still having a great time playing him. It's a mischievous, sprightly performance: he treats the action sequences as if they were slapstick routines. (Unfortunately, the director, Richard Donner, doesn't have as light a touch.) Danny Glover plays his partner, Murtaugh, an easygoing, conservative black family man; he's mostly called upon to react with horror to Riggs' dangerous antics, and the joke of their relationship gets a little tiresome. (The effect, sometimes, is of a white guy doing heroic stuff while his black pal shuffles along beside him. Glover, a good actor, deserves better.) Joe Pesci does small wonders with his supporting role as a ferrety, motor-mouthed money launderer, and Joss Ackland glowers like Alastair Sim as the head villain, a South African diplomat who smuggles drugs. Also with Patsy Kensit. Jeffrey Boam wrote the screenplay. The score is by Michael Kamen, Eric Clapton, and David Sanborn.—T.R. (Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and West Side Cinema. . . . ¶ 8th St. Playhouse, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through Aug. 29.)

The Little Thief—Directed by Claude Miller. In French. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lincoln Plaza.)

Murder (1930)—A carefully designed early Hitchcock whodunit set among theatre people. It's more languidly paced than his mid-thirties work, and the dialogue is spoken in stage rhythms, but there are inventive moments. Herbert Marshall, dryly amiable in his first talking picture, plays an eminent actor—a knight serving on a jury. Convinced of the innocence of the young actress (Norah



Robert Englund in "A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child"

Baring) who is on trial for murder, he tries to solve the case in order to save her life. The actual murderer turns out to be a transvestite—daring at the time. It's a very class-conscious film, but in a somewhat snobbish way; we seem to be expected to identify with Marshall's stylish courtliness and to see the "lower orders" through his eyes.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Sept. 4.)

Parenthood—The script, by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, is ambitiously constructed, tracing the relationships of several boomer-age parents with their kids, their siblings, and their own parents. The advantage of this arrangement is that none of the characters are onscreen very long: we have time to get sick of only about half of them, and some—especially the nervous, eager dad played by Steve Martin—are fun to watch. The drawback is that the movie has no drive. The dull title captures the tone precisely: the whole thing has been conceived generically, abstractly, and by the end the director, Ron Howard, is rushing from scene to scene tidying up loose ends, to make sure that each little individual drama gets its point across and that they all add up to a correct answer to the essay question "What is parenthood?" The movie tries very hard, but its wisdom is on the forlorn side. Also with Mary Steenburgen, Rick Moranis, Dianne Wiest, Jason Robards, Harley Kozak, Martha Plimpton, Keanu Reeves, and Tom Hulce.—T.R. (8/7/89) (34th St. East, Coronet, U. A. East, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Sawdust and Tinsel ("The Naked Night"; 1953)—Written and directed by Ingmar Bergman, the film is set in the circus world at the turn of the century. It opens with a flashback shot on different film stock: a clown's wife—a dumpy, middle-aged woman—bathes exhibitionistically in view of a whole regiment of soldiers; the clown comes and takes her away. From there the story moves to the circus owner, Ake Groenberg, and his voluptuous mistress, Harriet Andersson; this swinish Circe betrays him, and is in turn betrayed, and they go on together. The atmosphere suggests E. A. Dupont's 1925 film, "Variety," with Emil Jannings, but has upsetting qualities all its own. There is an erotic scene between Miss Andersson and Hasse Ekman, as a seducer-actor, that leaves audiences slightly out of breath. "Sawdust and Tinsel" is one of the bleakest of Bergman's films: no one is saved from total damnation; life is a circus, and the people are gross clowns; it is a round of frustration, humiliation, and defeat. Yet this heavy, mawkish Expressionism, of a kind widespread in Germany in the twenties, was extraordinarily popular with young Americans in the late sixties. In Swedish.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Sept. 5.)

Seven Chances (1925)—The plot gimmick—the hero must be married in a few hours in order to collect an inheritance—is an antique, and the play flopped on Broadway, but what Buster Keaton and his gag writers managed to do with the material will be everlastingly fresh. When the news of the shy hero's need to wed is published in the papers, prospective brides arrive, singly at first and then in droves, and the distraught man, fleeing them, dislodges a boulder, which dislodges others, and soon he is pursued by hundreds of huge boulders. It's a lovely comedy, imaginatively—possibly faultlessly—directed by Keaton. With Snitz Edwards and Ruth Dwyer.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Sept. 3-4.)

sex, lies, and videotape—Steven Soderbergh's smooth, handsome first feature generates a fair degree of psychological tension out of next to nothing. It's a triangle drama with a cunning little kink in it. The triangle consists of Ann (Andie MacDowell), a beautiful young Southern woman who has "never really been that much into sex"; her husband, John (Peter Gallagher), a sleazy yuppie lawyer; and her younger sister, Cynthia (Laura San Giacomo), who's sleeping with John. The kink is an old college pal of John's, named Graham (James Spader), a soft-spoken drifter who comes to town and changes everybody's life. Graham has sworn off sex, because, he says, it's the only way for him to stay honest; he's impotent, except when he's watching one of his dozens of home videos—all of them interviews he has conducted with women about sex. He's like a retired gunslinger, a laconic hombre who won't pull his artillery out of its holster because he's seen too much killin' already. This is "Shane" remade as a Southern psychodrama. But there's some real conviction in it—a mixed-up fervor that keeps us watching.—T.R. (8/7/89) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Plaza, Waverly, and Cinema Studio.)

Sherlock Jr. (1924)—The title of this Buster Keaton comedy doesn't do justice to what the movie is about: Keaton plays a projectionist who, while running a movie—"Hearts and Pearls"—enters the screen and becomes involved with the characters. Directed by Keaton, it's a wonderfully imaginative film, full of extraordinary tricks so immaculately executed that they look simple. It's a piece of native American surrealism. With Kathryn McGuire as the heroine, and Keaton's father, Joe Keaton, as the heroine's father.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Sept. 1-2.)

Shirley Valentine—With Pauline Collins, directed by Lewis Gilbert. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews Tower East, and Loews Paramount; starting Aug. 30.)

Sorry, Wrong Number (1948)—Lucille Fletcher wrote this overextended treatment of her radio play about a bedridden hypochrondriac who calls her husband at his office, overhears a couple of men arranging a murder, and slowly comes to realize that she is to be the victim. Barbara Stanwyck is the terrified and, finally, whimpering woman; Burt Lancaster is her morose husband. The director, Anatole Litvak, seems to be defeated by the extravagantly jumbled, shallow script. With Ann Richards.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Sept. 1-2.)

True Believer—A nifty thriller—fast and tense—about a Manhattan lawyer (James Woods) who was a hero of the counterculture but is now defending drug dealers and getting paid in cash. When he's goaded by his new law associate (Robert Downey, Jr.) into taking on a murder case, his eyes widen at the bare possibility that the man he's defending might be innocent. The movie makes us share the lawyer's energy and charge as he investigates the crime. He doesn't want to sleep; he lives off the excitement of having a cause. It's a pick-me-up of a movie. Nothing great, nothing terribly distinctive, but the aliveness of the texture can quicken your senses and keep you fascinated. Directed by Joseph Ruben, from a script by Wesley Strick.—P.K. (2/20/89) (Cinema Village; starting Sept. 6.)

When Harry Met Sally . . .—Rob Reiner's movie, from a script by Nora Ephron, takes a screwball-comedy idea and inflates it like a rubber raft. Harry (Billy Crystal) and Sally (Meg Ryan) meet in the late seventies, rub each other the wrong way, and then, after breaking up with their partners, become close friends; all the while, they're conducting a running debate on the question "Can a man and a woman ever be just friends, without sex getting in the way?" It's a Rohmer movie played as a sitcom. Crystal muddles through amiably, but Ryan flounders: the filmmakers give her impossible, unplayable scenes, and all she can do is be adorable. The movie keeps telling us that it's real and truthful and universal. Everything in it seems false. Also with Carrie Fisher and Bruno Kirby.—T.R. (8/7/89) (Beekman, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and Regency.)

The Wizard of Oz (1939)—Heavenly. Judy Garland as Dorothy, Bert Lahr as the Cowardly Lion, Ray Bolger as the Scarecrow, and Jack Haley as the Tin Woodman. Directed by Victor Fleming.—P.K. (Festival; starting Aug. 30.)

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown—The most original pop writer-director of the eighties, Pedro Almodóvar is Godard with a human face—a happy face. The artificial is what sends him sky high, and the Madrid of this film is (as the closing song has it) "Puro Teatro." This is a movie where after a while you can't tell sexy from funny. Pepa (Carmen Maura), an actress who works in TV and commercials, turns on her answering machine and learns that she has been jilted. Infuriated, she dashes around, on spike heels, in a short, tight skirt, trying to confront her long-time live-in lover, the elegant, vain Iván (Fernando Guillén). The women of the title include Iván's early lover (Julieta Serrano), his new lover (Kiti Manver), and two (Rossy De Palma and María Barranco) who are involved with his son (Antonio Banderas). Sleek-legged and chic, they run the theatrical gamut. Cinematography by José Luis Alcaine. In Spanish.—P.K. (11/14/88) (Carnegie Screening Room; through Aug. 31.)

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Notes and Comment

THIS year's procession of historic anniversaries has kept reminding us that human beings inherit little History but many histories. The past bequeaths us a small nest egg of stable, undisputed facts and a thick portfolio of speculative issues—divergent, ever-changing interpretations—because presents and futures alter pasts. What July 20, 1969, will eventually mean to us depends on whether the moon landing will turn out to have been a first step or a last one.

No one disputes that on September 1, 1939, the German Army crossed the Polish border, and that its action began the most destructive war in history. In the past fifty years, though, interpretations of that war have gone on changing. While no English-speaking historian has considered our enemies guiltless of aggression, some have allotted a share of blame to British appeasers or American isolationists. Others have argued that Adolf Hitler didn't want a world war but instead miscalculated—he thought that England and France wouldn't honor their guarantee to Poland, or that his agreement with Russia to divide Poland insured that the fighting there would end before a wider war could begin. Certainty eludes us, for, with the passage of time, the German dictator seems increasingly bizarre, even unreal. This is partly because today's Europe—and the Europe that will exist after 1992—is nothing like the Europe he envisioned. Then, too, Hitler's kind of leadership has gone out of style. The adjective "dynamic," which in some quarters was once applied to him and the other dictators of his time, seems less appropriate now than "irrational," or "insane." Yet this year's two bicentenaries—of the inauguration of our federal government and of the fall of the Bastille—combine to remind us of how very recently modern nations have discovered alternatives to one-man rule.

During the Second World War, most Americans believed that they were fighting for democracy, and when the war was over they thought that they had won. A few years later, though, some historians were arguing that the Allies had lost the war, because it had led to the spread of Communism; others maintained that the war had been a failure because the West had fallen out with the Soviet Union; and still others agreed, some gleefully and some with regret, that the war had destroyed Western civilization, or, at least, its cultural and moral authority. This year, however, all that disillusion seems dated. Because the Poles could vote against their government, and the Chinese dared to question theirs, the Second World War, though costly—probably fifty million lives—once again looks like a victory for democracy.

After history acquires detail (as archives are opened) and elaboration (as reinterpretations compete with original interpretations), it begins to fade and shrink. The blood spilled on the beaches of Normandy is already paling into metaphor, like the blood spilled at Bunker Hill; and, in time, the bloodstains in Tiananmen Square will pale as well. Survey texts polish off centuries in paragraphs, and the heterogeneity of past civilizations collapses into five numbered points about "the Age of." The past two hundred years have been called the Machine Age (in which we have prized handwork) and the Age of Nationalism (in which every nation has learned that it depends on every other) but not the Age of Democracy. Yet democracy has been the basic issue in many of its conflicts.

The world, while it hasn't had much experience of democracy, has already learned a few things that democracy doesn't do; for instance, the sixtieth anniversary of October 29, 1929, recalls that it doesn't assure prosperity. On the other hand, historians have begun to remark, though very tentatively, that the few modern democracies, in their relatively brief histories, have never actually gone to war with each other. After traditional enemies (the French and the English) and warlike people (the Scandinavians) adopted democracy, their governments started exchanging diplomatic notes rather than gunfire; and the United States has never fought a war against another democracy. Two hundred years is a short run, yet it is conceivable that modern democracy may be a grander development than we have suspected—one that is capable of changing human behavior, or even human nature. No one can predict the future of the past and read histories as yet unwritten. Still, one can imagine that another century's retrospect may find that wars became rarer as democracy continued to spread.

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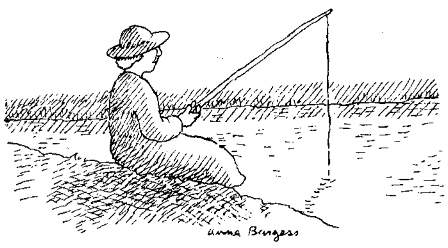
A FRIEND writes:

We live in uncertain times. And if we live on the island of Manhattan we live in an uncertain place. The Manhattan schist, which anchors our skyscrapers and makes a wild and picturesque haven of Central Park, is otherwise honeycombed with gas mains, water mains, subway tunnels, and steam pipes, and when one of those pipes gave way the other day, at the southeast corner of Gramercy Park (previously an enclave of peace), three people—two Con Edison workers, and a woman asleep in the bedroom of her third-story apartment, which faced the street—were killed, twenty-four people were injured, and thousands had the wits scared out of them. But it is probably safe to say that no one was actually surprised. This city has been blowing up in our imaginations for years.

New Yorkers—or, at least, the one-point-three million who live in the borough of Manhattan, where buildings are still heated with steam pipes, most of them older than anybody in City Hall—have an eerie way of dealing with precariousness. They ignore it, shored up by the myth of the Rock—the almighty, eternal schist. When they get into an elevator, they stay essentially where they are, and the rest of the world moves up or down until it settles itself at the level they would like to visit. They stream into the subways heedless of their surroundings, and they are already home, in their heads, when they emerge from beneath the streets. This is not sangfroid; it is otherworldliness. They are living in the past—in a time when the skyscrapers were going up, and the gas mains were being laid, and the schist was being rearranged for their convenience. And they live in the future, too, when, of course, it will all go KA-BOOM, the way it did last week.

Like everyone else within earshot of the explosion, I was out on the street—in my case, Third Avenue a few blocks south of the blast—in minutes, gaping at a Biblical pillar of gritty, roiling brownish-gray steam. A fire truck from SoHo sped past me up the avenue, toward something that was, for once, louder than *it* was, and I could see awe on the faces of the firefighters. This is an expression you do not often see on anyone in this city, let alone firefighters. We were being confronted by a sight that most of us had surely never seen before. It was as if something not in the blueprints (something *natural*) had burst out of the Rock, and it looked angry. It sounded that way, too—a deafening roar without the crescendo and diminuendo we associate with that word. This roar lasted upward of half an hour, at the same pitch and at the same thunderous decibel level. The pillar of steam lapped over the surrounding buildings and dwarfed the police officers and the firefighters and their tiny vehicles sparkling with red lights. The firefighters had no fire to put out, but they made themselves useful by evacuating people from the second- and third-story windows of the building on the southeast corner of Twentieth Street, who wanted to leave but could not get out the front door, which was only fifteen feet from the lip of the caldron.

In the calm of the following morning, I went back to have a look. There was no glass in most of the north-facing windows of the building on the corner, but everything else—except the street itself and the automobiles parked along its curbs—was intact. The face of Gramercy Park South east of Irving Place was uniformly the color of mud, which is something that the people around here are not accustomed to seeing. A rock the size of a small suitcase was still lying on top of an ex-Toyota. On the mud-covered sidewalks, people stood alone or in little groups, with their hands in their pockets, staring at the cars or craning to count the broken windows. They were mostly quiet, but they did not really look as though they had come to their existential senses. I thought of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Aes Triplex"—his essay about the deadly perils of being alive. When I got home, I pulled it off the shelf and, with a prickle of recognition, read about my fellow-citizens: "We have all heard of cities in South America built upon the side of fiery mountains, and how, even in this tremendous neighborhood, the inhabitants are not a jot more impressed by the solemnity of mortal conditions than if they were delving gardens in the greenest corner of England [though] the foundation shudders underfoot, the bowels of the mountain growl, and at any moment living ruin may leap skyhigh. . . . For the plain satisfaction of living, of being about their business in some sort or other, do the brave, serviceable men of every nation tread down the nettle danger, and pass flyingly over all the stumbling blocks of prudence."



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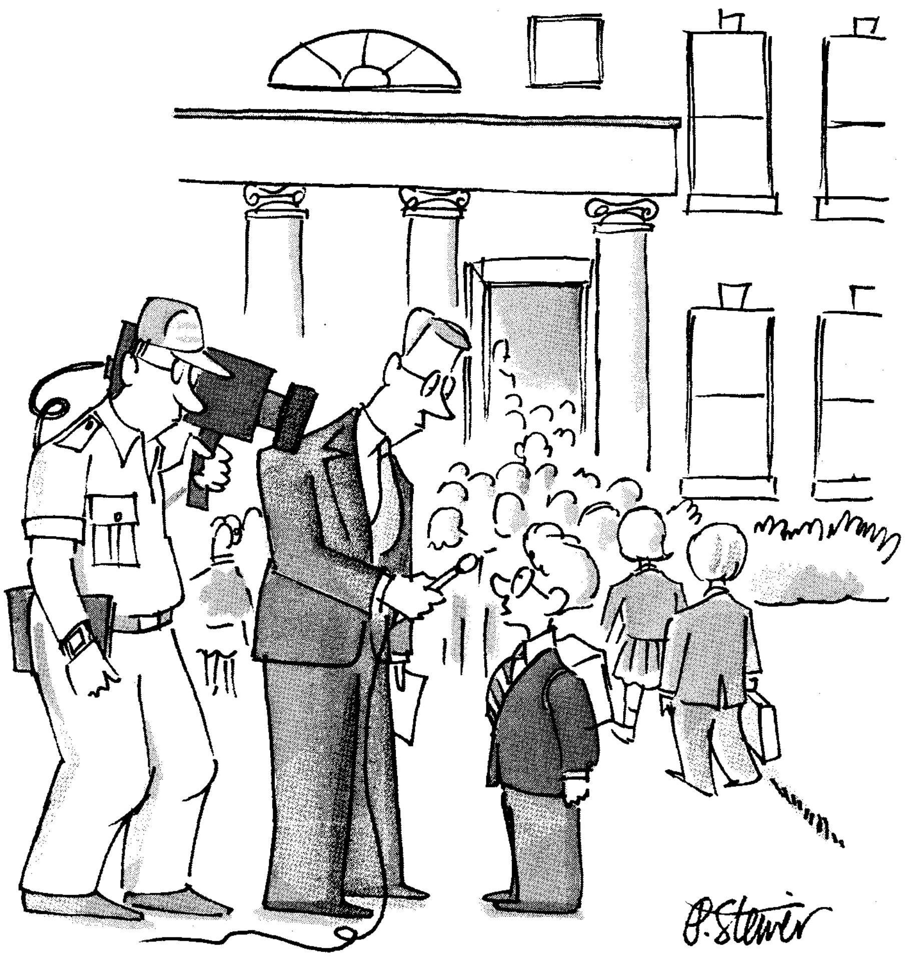
Big Sky

THINK of the largest painted canvases you know—Jackson Pollock's, Anselm Kiefer's. This one is larger. Think of the purest statements about color—Kasimir Malevich's white-on-white, Ad Reinhardt's black-on-black. This one is purer. Think of the deepest space you've ever seen represented in two dimensions. This beats it. Now think of where you're going to find it—at the Met. That's the Metropolitan Opera House, and the "it" is a seamless-looking flame-retardant length of cotton-and-linen fabric thirty-four yards high and sixty-five yards wide—capable of covering about two-thirds of a football field. It is called a painted-roll cyclorama, it is the largest such cyclorama in the world, it has twelve evenly spread coats of pale-blue paint, which grow very active under fluorescent light, and which represent the horizon, and it has just been installed in the theatre—a procedure so complex and delicate that members of the stage crew keep swiping photographs of the event from one another to check that they were really there. When the sky moved into the Amsterdam Avenue loading dock, rolled up like a big, soft sausage in a traffic-stopping wooden box over a hundred feet long, these workers held a piece of it in their bare hands.

We stopped by the Met recently to see the new roll cyc, and were escorted into the backstage area by Nick Bryson, who is the president of the American branch of Gerriets ("Rhymes with 'merits,' " Mr. Bryson says), a theatrical-draperies firm, which built the cyc at its home factory, in West Germany. When Mr. Bryson wasn't pointing out the Met's gigantic revolving stage, its catwalks that seemed as high up as the peak of K-2, its trapdoors that can plunge a disappearing phantasm as near the gates of hell as you get on a midtown F train, and a few ropes and wires that a visitor could break his neck on while gawking at everything else, he described some of the difficulties of getting a painted-roll cyc to the right place and in the right position at the right time. This one, for instance, had to reach the Met so that it could be unpacked and hung on Sunday, August 6th; there was no other day in the entire summer when the stage would be free. Therefore, the pieces of canvas that constitute it had to be woven, assembled, and stitched together, painted in a special hall with a pristine floor larger than the cyc itself, dried completely, rolled up, covered with waterproof plastic, packed into its travelling box (made from ten thousand dollars' worth of lumber), hauled to a container ship, and conveyed from Hamburg to Port Elizabeth, New Jersey, by August 4th, all with no hitches. At the port, the box, after clearing customs, was off-loaded by a huge crane onto a vehicle called a telescoping truck. (It can expand from a length of forty feet to one of eighty-five feet and, contracting, can tap away at an item so that it gradually off-loads itself.) The truck crossed into Manhattan according to a route and a time predetermined by the Port Authority—the George Washington Bridge at 1 A.M. After paying a toll of sixty-one dollars, the driver negotiated his way around the street corners of Manhattan, and the truck arrived at the Met an hour later. The staff turned up at 7 A.M., and some five hours after that the cyc was hanging along three-quarters of the stage perimeter like a shower curtain in a bathtub—vertical "for the first time since it was born," as Joe Clark, the Met's technical director, put it.

As a replacement for a blue cyc, now worn out, that the Met put in place twenty-three years ago, the new one is ready to present the heavens to audiences for "La Gioconda," "The Abduction from the Seraglio," and "La Bohème," just as the old one did. The transition at the Met was a big deal only backstage. Other opera houses, however, have learned the hard way that heaven can wait, sometimes with a vengeance. Mr. Bryson told us that when Gerriets delivered a roll cyc to the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen the backstage area turned out to be too congested for the curtain to be off-loaded without bending—and since even a small crease would show up glaringly in the auditorium, the possibility of causing one was regarded with horror. So the crew had to employ two giant cranes to position the cyc overhead and slide it down through a hole in the theatre roof. At the National Theatre of Taipei, it was discovered that an arriving cyc had been loaded on its rigging backward; the box had to be taken out and rotated a hundred and eighty degrees. At the opera house in Istanbul, the flooring was insufficient, so a hole was broken in the wall, and the wrapped cyc was left half in and half out of the backstage area for six months, until the flooring was ready. (It was at Istanbul, Mr. Bryson observed, that Gerriets learned that its waterproof plastic wrapping really was effective.) In the case of the Met, the skilled and efficient technical crew were heroes. "For me, technical theatre people are the last of the Renaissance men," Mr. Bryson said. "You need physics, engineering, philosophy, music, art, and knowledge of electricity, electronics, computers, and lighting. The job never ends. A guy like Joe Clark has to solve tremendous problems, and he does it like rolling off a log."

Talk of rolling logs reminded us of high-school experiences of rolling paint along cycs, an activity so profoundly boring that it seemed punitive. We considered the Met's acquisition. At the moment, it hasn't a scratch or a mark: it may well be the largest clean continuous surface in the tri-state area. But, we asked Mr. Bryson, what if it needs to be cleaned? "*Clean* it?" he said, and he shook his head. "You don't. You can dust it. But if it gets paint or dirt on it, you'd need a hall as big as *it* is to repaint it. If you get paint or dirt on it, somebody *dies*."



"I fully expect the third grade to hold plenty of difficulties, but I've had a restful summer and think I'm up to whatever challenges I encounter."

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Aboriginality

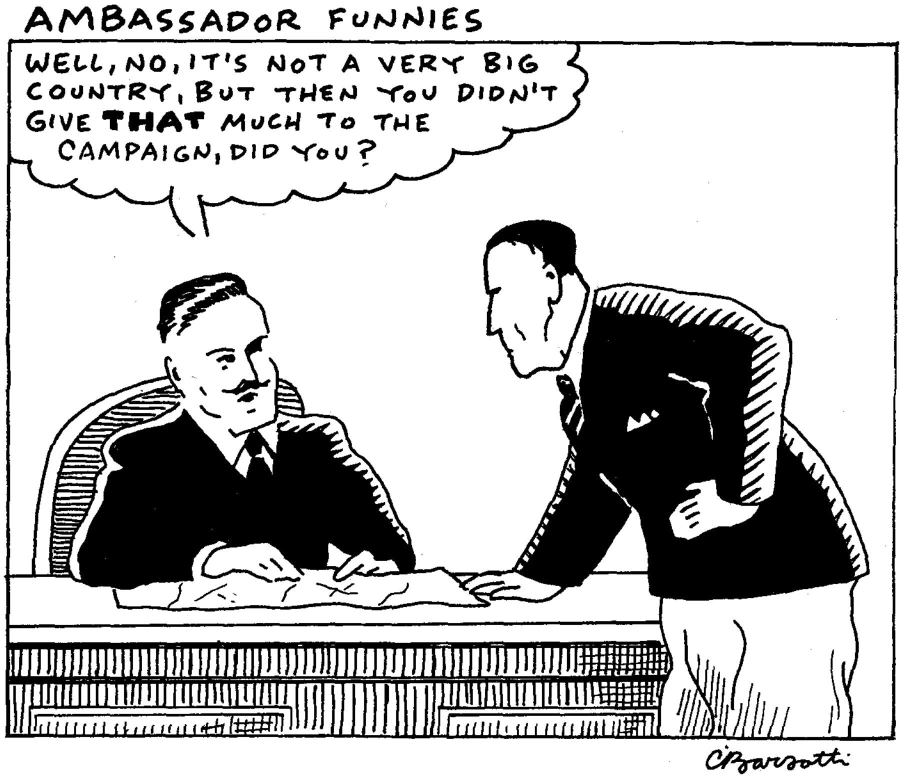
ONE of our favorite things about Burnum Burnum, the beefy, silvery-eyed Australian Aboriginal who has played professional Rugby, read law in Tasmania, run for the Australian senate twice, and acted in three films (one of which has him transform himself, when the moon is right, into the extinct Tasmanian tiger), is "Burnum Burnum's Aboriginal Australia: A Traveller's Guide," his first book, which was just published here. The book begins, "G'day, I'm Burnum Burnum, of the Wurundjeri people, who married a girl from the Yotta Yottas and had children at Wagga Wagga. My mother grew up close to Nowa Nowa, which is just near Mount Baw Baw. I've travelled to Goonoo Goonoo, Kwork Kwork, Yerri Yerri, and Bulu Bulu, and once, at the Bong Bong picnic races, I backed a horse in the Melbourne Cup called Gatum Gatum."

At a recent storytelling event at the Brooklyn Museum, at which Burnum Burnum was on hand to perform and, as he put it, "to exchange good will," many people's favorite thing about him seemed to be his beard, which cascades for a considerable distance, like a white waterfall in a fine gray mist. "How would *you* describe it?" we asked several children, but they were too transfixed to speak. Perhaps they loosened up later, when audience participation required dozens of the listeners (out of two or three hundred) to represent starfish, canoes, and whales as Mr. Burnum recounted a legend that explained how the starfish came to be on the bottom of the sea.

"Of course, I can't demand that people pay attention, but it is important for you to understand the legends," Mr. Burnum told the audience. "All native peoples right down through history—it doesn't matter whether you come from the West, from Europe; it doesn't matter whether you come from the Inuits, the Kalahari Bushmen, the Ainu people of Japan, the Aboriginal people of Australia, North and South American native people—all peoples of the earth, the first way that we communicated was by the process of storytelling. It links us all together, though today it's not practiced very much. Way back in the Aboriginal Dreamtime era, the mythical heroes were both animal and human and had the ability to switch from one state to the other. They created the landscape, and, having created it, they merged into the landscape and formed all the rocks and the hills—in a sense, out of their own selves. Today, we have three hundred different Aboriginal nations, with more than three hundred different languages and dialects. When people in our culture hand down information, it's generally around a campfire at nighttime. The children have had to be very, very disciplined and listen very intently, because eventually they would have the responsibility of passing the legends on. By reënacting and practicing, we have been able to preserve a continuous stream of accuracy through the ages. Now I'd like to say to the children here in Brooklyn that before the reënactments, which we call corroborees, the people would run into the bush and scrape up some white clay or red ochre, rub it into a paste, and apply it all over their bodies. Then, in their minds, hearts, and memories, they themselves would go way, way back to the Dream period and become the mythical heroes who created the landscape. So run into the bush and get some clay." At this, about forty participants ran to the back of the museum gallery, ducked toward the floor, then ran back. Burnum Burnum, going on without a pause, said, "When Aboriginal people see anything natural in the bush, you can be certain that there's a legend that describes how it happened."

The Australian press is fond of referring to Burnum Burnum's recent bride (and third wife), who is not an Aboriginal, and to a gold Mercedes-Benz he once owned. His countrymen often seem perplexed about how to respond to a person who lives successfully and aggressively in two disparate worlds. Burnum Burnum's best-known media event took place on January 26, 1988, Australia's bicentenary. "It is true," he told his American audience, "that I went over to England on Australia Day, 1988, and did a piece of theatre. I stood on the White Cliffs of Dover and planted our flag there and made a declaration by just breathing words into the air, and I think it might be appropriate for me to tell you what I said." He then quoted himself as follows:

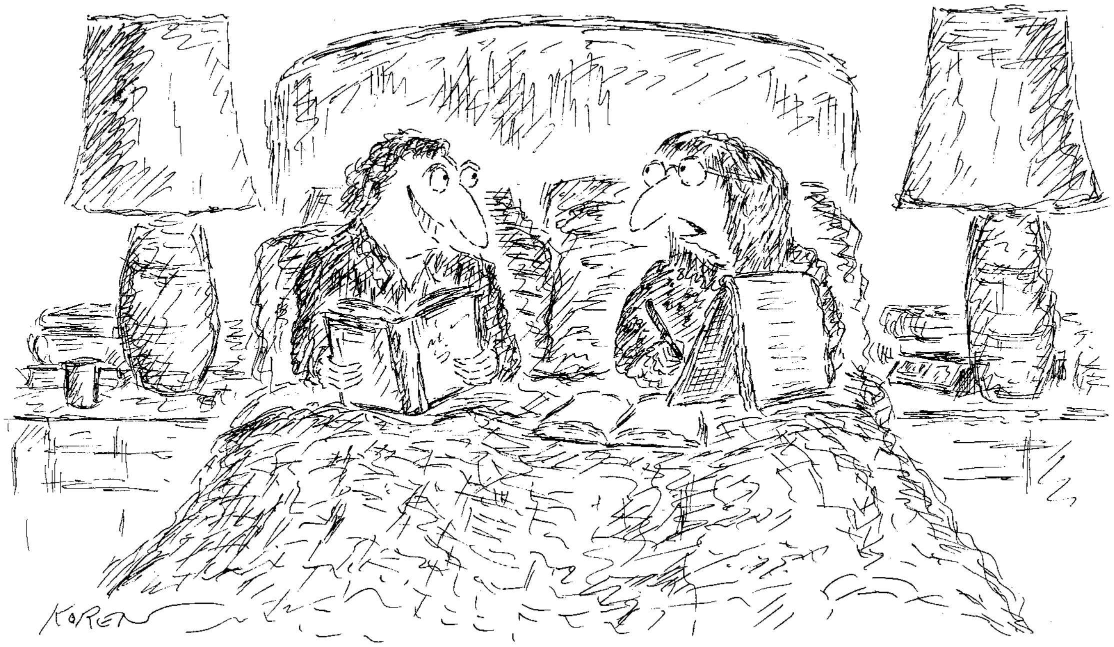
> I, Burnum Burnum, being a nobleman of ancient Australia, do hereby take possession of England on behalf of the Aboriginal People.
>
> In claiming this colonial outpost, we wish no harm to you natives, but assure you that we are here to bring you good manners, refinement, and an opportunity to make a Koompartoo—"a fresh start."
>
> Henceforth, an Aboriginal face shall appear on your coins and stamps to signify our sovereignty over this domain. For the more advanced, we bring the complex language of the Pitjantjajara; we will teach you how to have a spiritual relationship with the earth and show you how to get bush tucker.
>
> We do not intend to souvenir, pickle, and preserve the heads of two thousand of your people, nor to publicly display the skeletal remains of your Royal Highness, as was done to our Queen Truganinni for eighty years. Neither do we intend to poison your water holes, lace your flour with strychnine, or introduce you to highly toxic drugs.
>
> On the basis of our fifty-thousand-year


AMBASSADOR FUNNIES
WELL, NO, IT'S NOT A VERY BIG COUNTRY, BUT THEN YOU DIDN'T GIVE THAT MUCH TO THE CAMPAIGN, DID YOU?
CBarsotti

heritage, we acknowledge the need to preserve the Caucasian race as of interest to antiquity, although we may be inclined to conduct experiments by measuring the size of your skulls for levels of intelligence. We pledge not to sterilize your women, nor to separate your children from their families.

At the end of two hundred years, we will make a Treaty to validate occupation by peaceful means and not by conquest. Finally, we solemnly promise not to make a quarry of England and export your valuable minerals back to the old country, Australia, and we vow never to destroy three-quarters of your trees, but to encourage Earth Repair Action to unite people, communities, religions, and nations in a common, productive, peaceful purpose.

Afterward, a young black woman came up to Mr. Burnum and said, "Send my love to the brothers and sisters in Australia. Tell them we pray everything will work out."



"There are some things that are _not_ *funny, and sex is one of them!"*

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Heading North

A MAN we know writes:

My parents came from Dundee, Scotland, shortly before the First World War. Like so many immigrants, they had tender feelings for the old country and the friends and kin they had left behind, but by the time I was born they had developed a passionate, though undemonstrative, attachment to their new land. (They were gentle, undemonstrative people.) When the war in Europe broke out, in September of 1939, I was just entering my senior year at Yonkers High School. Hitler had attacked Poland; Great Britain immediately declared war on Germany. I felt I had to go. So I walked out of home room before classes started, went out to the street, and held up my thumb. I was heading north—to Ontario, to join the Black Watch, the kilted Highland regiment.

Rides didn't come easily. By one o'clock that afternoon, I had got only as far as the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, in the Catskills. As I stood leaning on the rail, looking down at the river, a beefy state trooper in an open convertible pulled up. "C'mere," he ordered, beckoning with a big hand. He wanted to know what I was doing on the bridge, and said, "Playing hooky?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"Get in the car," he ordered. I did, and he stared at me and then asked, "Where you going?"

I told him, and he just kept staring. "What did your folks say?" he asked.

"I didn't tell them."

His expression didn't change. "They good people?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I said, surprised at the question.

"And you sneaked out like a thief." He kept staring, and I felt a need to confess—something, I wasn't sure what. I heard myself talking and talking, and soon the tears came.

He put the car in gear, went on across the bridge, and turned south. At a diner, he bought me lunch and talked a deputy sheriff into giving me a lift down Route 9-W. Before he got back into his car, he said, "You don't have to rush off to war, kid. Wars come and get you."

It was almost eleven o'clock when I reached home, after a succession of long walks in the dark, an occasional ride in a produce truck or a pickup, and, finally, rides on a ferry boat and a trolley car. My parents were distraught. They had called a couple of my schoolmates, who had quickly guessed where I was headed. My father seemed carved out of ice ready to fragment. My mother, in tears, insisted on feeding me. We sat silent in the cramped kitchen of our little apartment. Then I tried to make light of my odyssey by telling them about the trooper who had bought me lunch. "What a nice man," my mother said, and just then my father erupted.

He slammed the table so hard the milk slopped. "If I'd wanted any son of mine to fight for the goddam King of England, we'd have stayed put in the old country!" he shouted. I sat open-mouthed. I had never heard this gentle man swear, certainly not in front of my mother. "*This* is your country," he said, in a strangled voice I hardly recognized. Then, more softly, "You'll get your chance to go for a soldier once your country's in it."

My mother, undisputed boss of the house, sat absolutely still, looking at the wet tablecloth.

My father got up, pushed his chair in, and went down the hall to the front room to light his pipe and read his paper. I helped my mother with the dishes and tried to tell her how sorry I was. "Wheesht, wheesht," she said, shushing me. "Away and say good night to your dad and get to bed. You'll be tired in the morning."

WIGTIME

WHEN her mother was dying in the Walley hospital, Anita came home to take care of her—though nursing was not what she did anymore. She was stopped one day in the corridor by a short, broad-shouldered, broad-hipped woman with clipped grayish-brown hair.

"I heard you were here, Anita," this woman said, with a laugh that seemed both aggressive and embarrassed. "Don't look so dumbfounded!"

It was Margot, whom Anita had not seen for more than thirty years.

"I want you to come out to the house," Margot said. "Give yourself a break. Come out soon."

Anita took a day off and went to see her. Margot and her husband had built a new house overlooking the harbor, on a spot where there used to be nothing but scrubby bushes and children's secret paths. It was built of gray brick and was long and low. But high enough at that, Anita suggested—high enough to put some noses out of joint across the street, in the handsome hundred-year-old houses with their prize view.

"Bugger them," said Margot. "They took up a petition against us. They went to the Committee."

But Margot's husband already had the Committee sewed up.

Margot's husband had done well. Anita had already heard that. He owned a fleet of buses that took children to school and senior citizens to see the blossoms in Niagara and the fall leaves in Haliburton. Sometimes they carried singles clubs and other holidayers on more adventurous trips—to Nashville or Las Vegas.

Margot showed her around. The kitchen was done in almond—Anita made a mistake, calling it cream—with teal-green and butter-yellow trim. Margot said that all that natural-wood look was passé. They did not enter the living room, with its rose carpet, striped silk chairs, and yards and yards of swooping pale-green figured curtains. They admired it from the doorway—all exquisite, shadowy, inviolate. The master bedroom and its bath were done in white and gold and poppy red. There was a Jacuzzi and a sauna.

"I might have liked something not so bright myself," said Margot. "But you can't ask a man to sleep in pastels."

Anita asked her if she ever thought about getting a job.

Margot flung back her head and snorted with laughter. "Are you kidding? Anyway, I do have a job. Wait till you see the big lunks I have to feed. Plus this place doesn't exactly run itself on magic horsepower."

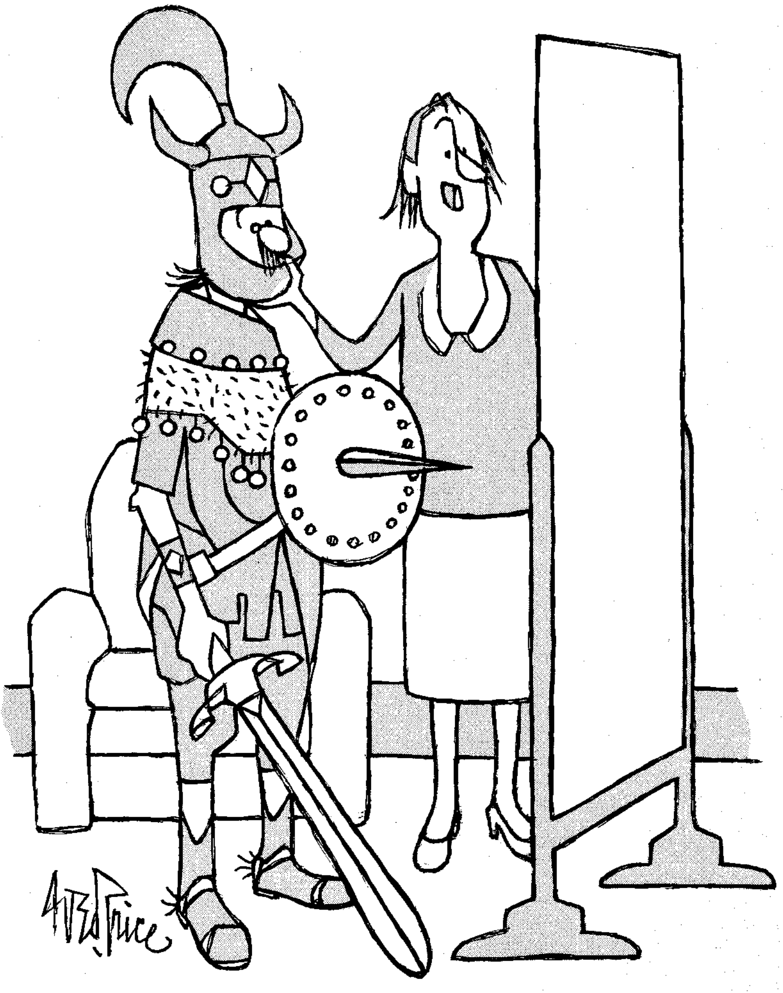
She took a pitcher of sangria out of the refrigerator and put it on a tray, with two matching glasses. "You like this stuff? Good. We'll sit and drink out on the deck."

Margot was wearing green flowered shorts and a matching top. Her legs were thick and marked with swollen veins, the flesh of her upper arms was dented, her skin was brown, mole-spotted, leathery from lots of sun. "How come you're still thin?" she asked with amusement. She flipped Anita's hair. "How come you're not gray? Any help from the drugstore? You look pretty." She said this without envy, as if speaking to somebody younger than herself, still untried and unseasoned.

It looked as if all her care, all her vanity, went into the house.

MARGOT and Anita both grew up on farms in Ashfield Township. Anita lived in a drafty shell of a brick house that hadn't had any new wallpaper or linoleum for twenty years, but there was a stove in the parlor which could be lit, and she sat in there in peace and comfort to do her homework. Margot often did her homework sitting up in the bed she had to share with two little sisters. Anita seldom went to Margot's house, because of the crowdedness and confusion, and the terrible temper of Margot's father. Once, she had gone there when they were getting ducks ready for market. Feathers floated everywhere. There were feathers in the milk jug and a horrible smell of feathers burning on the stove. Blood was puddled on the oilclothed table and dripping to the floor.

Margot seldom went to Anita's house, because without exactly saying so Anita's mother disapproved of the friendship. When Anita's mother looked at Margot, she seemed to be totting things up—the blood and feathers, the stovepipe sticking through the kitchen roof, Margot's



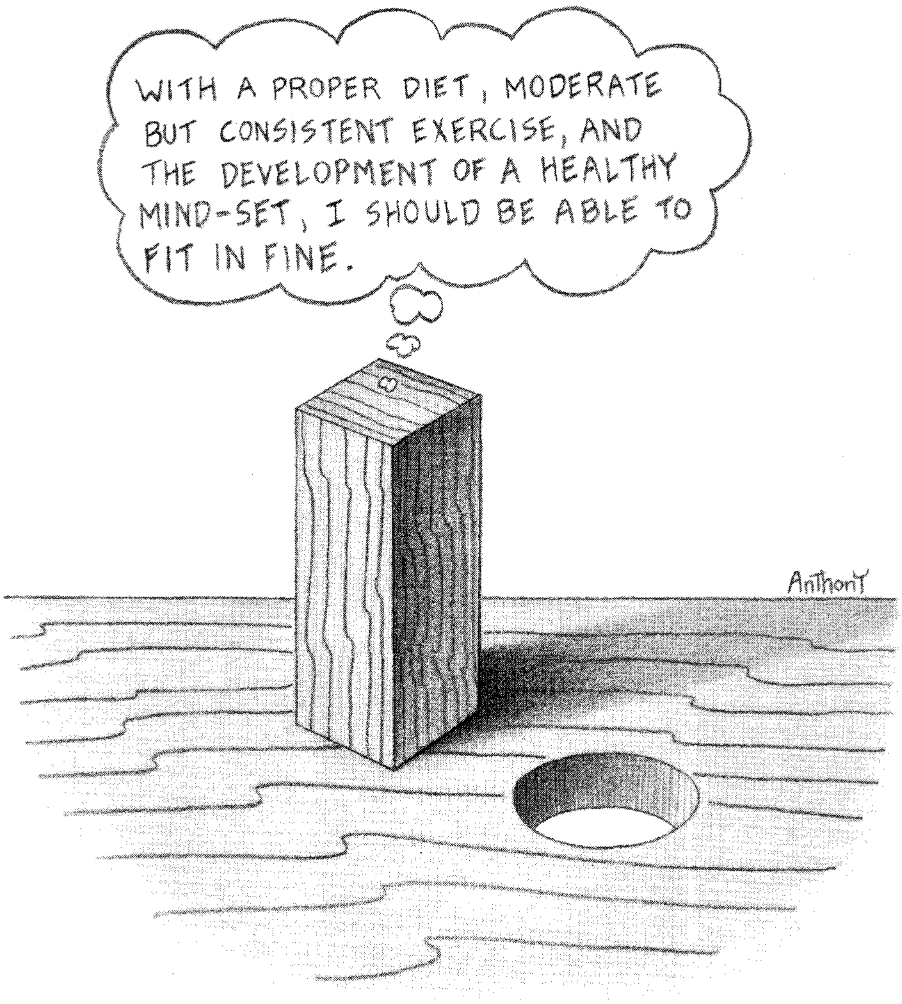
"*Impregnable, yes, but not afraid to stop and smell the flowers.*"

father yelling that he'd tan somebody's arse.

But they met every morning, struggling head down against the snow that blew off Lake Huron, or walking as fast as they could through a predawn world of white fields, icy swamps, pink sky, and fading stars and murderous cold. Away beyond the ice on the lake they could see a ribbon of open water, ink-blue or robin's-egg, depending upon the light. Pressed against their chests were notebooks, textbooks, homework. They wore the skirts, blouses, and sweaters that had been acquired with difficulty (in Margot's case there had been subterfuge and blows) and were kept decent with great effort. They bore the stamp of Walley High School, where they were bound, and they greeted each other with relief. They had got up in the dark in cold rooms with frost-whitened windows and pulled underwear on under their nightclothes, while stove lids banged in the kitchen, dampers were shut, younger brothers and sisters scurried to dress themselves downstairs. Margot and her mother took turns going out to the barn to milk cows and fork down hay. The father drove them all hard, and Margot said they'd think he was sick if he didn't hit somebody before breakfast. Anita could count herself lucky, having brothers to do the barn work and a father who did not usually hit anybody. But she still felt, these mornings, as if she'd come up through deep dark water.

"Think of the coffee," they told each other, battling on toward the store on the highway, a ramshackle haven. Strong tea, steeped black in the country way, was the drink in both their houses.

Teresa Gault unlocked the store before eight o'clock, to let them in. Pressed against the door, they saw the fluorescent lights come on, blue spurts darting from the ends of the tubes, wavering, almost losing heart, then blazing white. Teresa came smiling like a hostess, edging around the cash register, holding a cherry-red quilted satin dressing gown tight at the throat, as if that could protect her from the freezing air when she opened the door. Her eyebrows were black wings made with a pencil, and she used another pencil—a red one—to outline her mouth. The bow in the upper lip looked as if it had been cut with scissors.


WITH A PROPER DIET, MODERATE BUT CONSISTENT EXERCISE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HEALTHY MIND-SET, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIT IN FINE.
Anthony

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What a relief, what a joy, then, to get inside, into the light, to smell the oil-heater and set their books on the counter and take their hands out of their mittens and rub the pain from their fingers. Then they bent over and rubbed their legs—the bare inch or so that was numb and in danger of freezing. They did not wear stockings, because it wasn't the style. They wore ankle socks inside their boots (their saddle shoes were left at school). Their skirts were long—this was the winter of 1948-49—but there was still a crucial bit of leg left unprotected. Some country girls wore stockings under their socks. Some even wore ski pants pulled up bulkily under their skirts. Margot and Anita would never do that. They would risk freezing rather than risk getting themselves laughed at for such countrified contrivances.

Teresa brought them cups of coffee, hot black coffee, very sweet and strong. She marvelled at their courage. She touched a finger to their cheeks or their hands and gave a little shriek and a shudder. "Like ice! Like ice!" To her it was amazing that anybody would go out in the Canadian winter, let alone walk a mile in it. What they did every day to get to school made them heroic and strange in her eyes, and a bit grotesque.

This seemed to be particularly so because they were girls. She wanted to know if such exposure interfered with their periods. "Will it not freeze the eggs?" was what she actually said. Margot and Anita figured this out and made a point, thereafter, of warning each other not to get their eggs frozen. Teresa was not vulgar—she was just foreign. Reuel had met and married her overseas, in Alsace-Lorraine, and after he went home she followed on the boat with all the other war brides. It was Reuel who ran the school bus, this year when Margot and Anita were seventeen and in grade twelve. Its run started here at the store and gas station that the Gaults had bought on the

Kincardine highway, within sight of the lake.

Teresa told about her two miscarriages. The first one took place in Walley, before they moved out here and before they owned a car. Reuel scooped her up in his arms and carried her to the hospital. (The thought of being scooped up in Reuel's arms caused such a pleasant commotion in Anita's body that she was almost ready to put up with the agony that Teresa said she had undergone to experience it.) The second time happened here in the store. Reuel, working in the garage, could not hear her weak cries as she lay on the floor in her blood. A customer came in and found her. Thank God, said Teresa, for Reuel's sake even more than her own. Reuel would not have forgiven himself. Her eyelids fluttered, her eyes did a devout downward swoop when she referred to Reuel and their intimate life together.

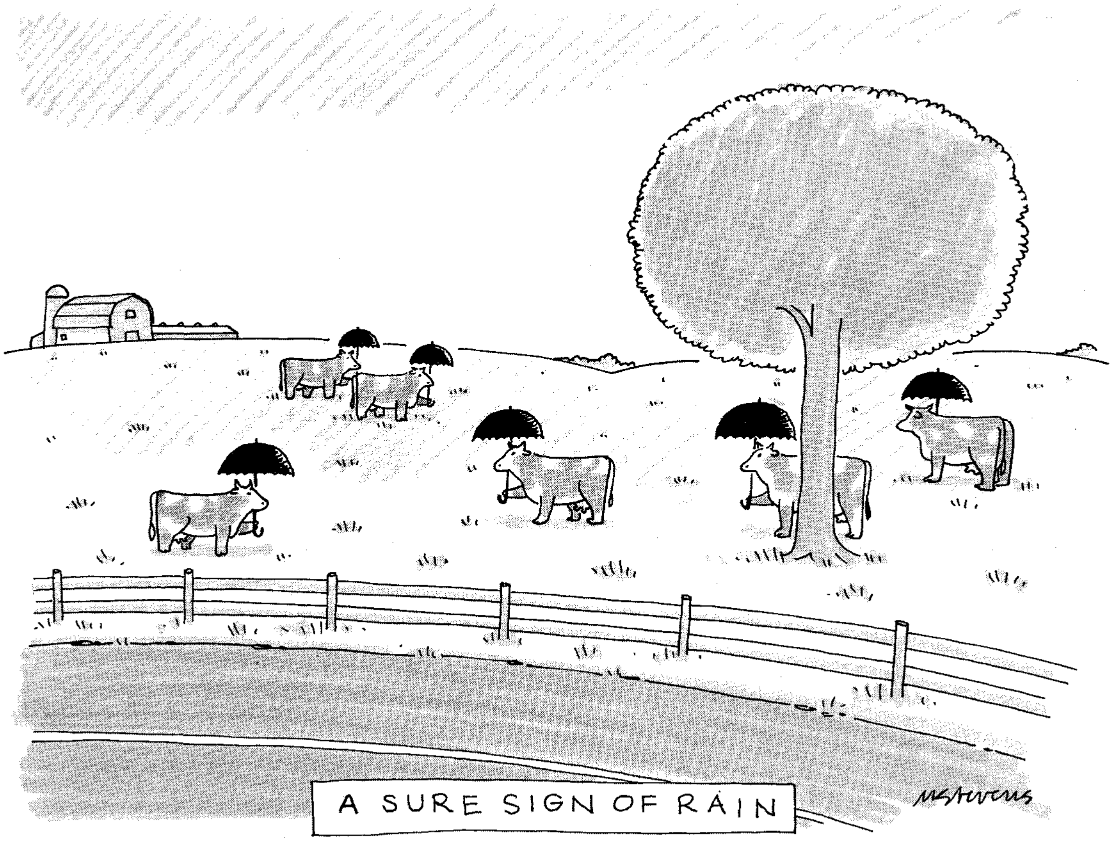
While Teresa talked, Reuel would be passing in and out of the store. He went out and got the engine running, then left the bus to warm up and went back into the living quarters, without acknowledging any of them, or even answering Teresa, who interrupted herself to ask if he had forgotten his cigarettes, or did he want more coffee, or perhaps he should have warmer gloves. He stomped the snow from his boots in a way that was more an announcement of his presence than a sign of any concern for floors. His tall, striding body brought a fan of cold air behind it, and the tail of his open parka usually managed to knock something down—jello boxes or tins of corn, arranged in a fancy way by Teresa. He didn't turn around to look.

Teresa gave her age as twenty-eight—the same age as Reuel's. Everybody believed she was older—up to ten years older. Margot and Anita examined her close up and decided that she looked burned. Something about her skin, particularly at the hairline and around the mouth and eyes, made you think of a pie left too long in the oven, so that it was not charred but dark brown around the edges. Her hair was thin, as if affected by the same drought or fever, and it was too black—they were certain it was dyed. She was short, and small-boned, with tiny wrists and feet, but her body seemed puffed out below the waist, as if it had never recovered from those brief, dire pregnancies. Her smell was like something sweet cooking—spicy jam.

She would ask anything, just as she would tell anything. She asked Margot and Anita if they were going out with boys yet.

"Oh, why not? Does your fathers not let you? I was attracting to boys by the time I was fourteen, but my father would not let me. They come and whistle under my window, he chases them away. You should pluck your eyebrows. You both. That would make you look nicer. Boys like a girl when she makes herself all nice. That is something I never forget. When I was on the boat coming across the Atlantic Ocean with all the other wives I spend all my time preparing myself for my husband. Some of those wives, they just sat and played cards. Not me! I was washing my hair and putting on a beautiful oil to soften my skin and I rubbed and rubbed with a stone to get the rough spots off my feet. I forget what you call them—the rough spots on the feet's skin? And polish my nails and pluck my eyebrows and do myself all up like a prize! For my husband to meet me in Halifax. While all those others do is sit and play cards and gossiping, gossiping with each other."

They had heard a different story about Teresa's second miscarriage. They had heard that it happened because Reuel told her he was sick of her and wanted her to go back to Europe, and in her despair she had thrown herself against a table and dislodged the baby.



A SURE SIGN OF RAIN

AT side roads and at farm gates Reuel stopped to pick up students who were waiting, stomping their feet to keep warm or scuffling in the snowbanks. Margot and Anita were the only girls of their age riding the bus that year. Most of the others were boys in grades nine and ten. They could have been hard to handle, but Reuel quelled them even as they came up the steps.

"Cut it out. Hurry up. On board if you're coming on board."

And if there was any start of a fracas on the bus, any hooting or grabbing or punching, or even any moving from seat to seat or too much laughing and loud talk, Reuel would call out, "Smarten up if you don't want to walk! Yes, you there—I mean you!" Once he had put a boy out for smoking, miles from Walley. Reuel himself smoked all the time. He had the lid of a mayonnaise jar sitting on the dashboard for an ashtray. Nobody challenged him, ever, about anything he did. His temper was well known. It was thought to go naturally with his red hair.

People said he had red hair, but Margot and Anita remarked that only his mustache and the hair right above his ears were red. The rest of it, the hair receding from the temples but thick and wavy elsewhere, especially in the back, which was the part they most often got to see—the rest was a tawny color like the pelt of a fox they had seen one morning crossing the white road. And the hair of his heavy eyebrows, the hair along his arms and on the backs of his hands was still more faded, though it glinted in any light. How had his mustache kept its fire? They spoke of this. They discussed in detail, coolly, everything about him. Was he good-looking or was he not? He had a redhead's flushed and spotty skin, a high, shining forehead, light-colored eyes that seemed ferocious but indifferent. Not good-looking, they decided. Queer-looking, actually.

But when Anita was anywhere near him she had a feeling of controlled desperation along the surface of her skin. It was something like the far-off beginning of a sneeze. This feeling was at its worst when she had to get off the bus and he was standing beside the step. The tension flitted from her front to her back as she went past him. She never spoke of this to Margot, whose contempt for men seemed to her firmer than her own. Margot's mother dreaded Margot's father's lovemaking as much as the children dreaded his cuffs and kicks, and had once slept all night in the granary, with the door bolted, to avoid it. Margot called lovemaking "carrying on." She spoke disparagingly of Teresa's "carrying on" with Reuel. But it had occurred to Anita that this very scorn of Margot's, her sullenness and disdain, might be a thing that men could find attractive. Margot might be attractive in a way that she herself was not. It had nothing to do with prettiness. Anita thought that she was prettier, though it was plain that Teresa wouldn't give high marks to either of them. It had to do with a bold lassitude that Margot showed sometimes in movement, with the serious breadth of her hips and the already womanly curve of her stomach, and a look that would come over her large brown eyes—a look both defiant and helpless, not matching up with anything Anita had ever heard her say.

By the time they reached Walley, the day had started. Not a star to be seen anymore, nor a hint of pink in the sky. The town, with its buildings, streets, and interposing routines, was set up like a barricade against the stormy or frozen-still world they'd woken up in. Of course their houses were barricades, too, and so was the store, but those were nothing, compared to town. A block inside town, it was as if the countryside didn't exist. The great drifts of snow on the roads and the wind tearing and howling through the trees—that didn't exist. In town, you had to behave as if you'd always been in town. Town students, now thronging the streets around the high school, led lives of privilege and ease. They got up at eight o'clock in houses with heated bedrooms and bathrooms. (This was not always the case, but Margot and Anita believed it was.) They were apt not to know your name. They expected you to know theirs, and you did.

The high school was like a fortress, with its narrow windows and decorative ramparts of dark-red brick, its long flight of steps and daunting doors, and the Latin words cut in stone: *Scientia Atque Probitas*. When they got inside those doors, at about a quarter to nine, they had come all the way from home, and home, and all stages of the journey, seemed improbable. The effects of the coffee had worn off. Nervous yawns overtook them, under the harsh lights of the assembly hall. Ranged ahead were the demands of the day: Latin, English, geometry, chemistry, history, French, geography, physical training. Bells rang at ten to the hour, briefly releasing them. Upstairs, downstairs, clutching books and ink bottles, they made their anxious way, under the hanging lights and the

"Listen, I have money on the other line. Can I call you back?"

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pictures of royalty and dead educators. The wainscoting, varnished every summer, had the same merciless gleam as the principal's glasses. Humiliation was imminent. Their stomachs ached and threatened to growl as the morning wore on. They feared sweat under their arms and blood on their skirts. They shivered going into English or geometry classes, not because they did badly in those classes (the fact was that they did quite well in almost everything) but because of the danger of being asked to get up and read something, say a poem off by heart, or write the solution to a problem on the blackboard in front of the class. *In front of the class*—those were dreadful words to them.

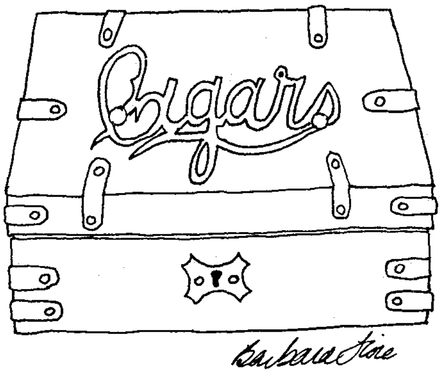
Then, three times a week, came physical training—a special problem for Margot, who had not been able to get the money out of her father to buy a gym suit. She had to say that she had left her suit at home, or borrow one from some girl who was being excused. But once she did get a suit on she was able to loosen up and run around the gym, enjoying herself, yelling for the basketball to be thrown to her, while Anita went into such rigors of self-consciousness that she allowed the ball to hit her on the head.

Better moments intervened. At noon hour they walked downtown and looked in the windows of a beautiful carpeted store that sold only wedding and evening clothes. Anita planned a springtime wedding, with bridesmaids in pink-and-green silk and overskirts of white organza. Margot's wedding was to take place in the fall, with the bridesmaids wearing apricot velvet. In Woolworth's they looked at lipsticks and earrings. They dashed into the drugstore and sprayed themselves with sample cologne. If they had any money to buy some necessity for their mothers, they spent some of the change on cherry Cokes or sponge toffee. They could never be deeply unhappy, because they believed that something remarkable was bound to happen to them. They could become heroines, love and power of some sort were surely waiting.

TERESA welcomed them, when they got back, with coffee, or hot chocolate with cream. She dug into a package of store cookies and gave them Fig Newtons or marshmallow puffs dusted with colored coconut. She took a look at their books and asked what homework they had. Whatever they mentioned, she, too, had studied. In every class, she had been a star.

"English—perfect marks in my English! But I never knew then that I would fall in love and come to Canada. Canada! I think it is only polar bears living in Canada!"

Reuel wouldn't have come in. He'd be fooling around with the bus or with something in the garage. His mood was usually fairly good as they got on the bus. "All aboard that's coming aboard!" he would call. "Fasten your seat belts! Adjust your oxygen masks! Say your prayers! We're takin' to the highway!" Then he'd sing to himself, just under the racket of the bus, as they got clear of town. Nearer home his mood of the morning took over, with its aloofness and unspecific contempt. He might say, "Here you are, ladies—end of a perfect day," as they got off. Or he might say nothing. But indoors Teresa was full of chat. Those school days she talked about led into wartime adventures: a German soldier hiding in the garden, to whom she had taken a little cabbage soup, then the first Americans she saw—black Americans—arriving on tanks and creating a foolish and wonderful impression that the tanks and the men were all somehow joined together. Then her little wartime wedding dress being made out of her mother's lace tablecloth. Pink roses pinned in her hair. Unfortunately, the dress had been torn up for rags to use in the garage. How could Reuel know?



Sometimes Teresa was deep in conversation with a customer. No treats or hot drinks then—all they got was a flutter of her hand, as if she were being borne past in a ceremonial carriage. They heard bits of the same stories. The German soldier, the black Americans, another German blown to pieces, his leg, in its boot, ending up at the church door, where it remained, everybody walking by to look at it. The brides on the boat. Teresa's amazement at the length of time it took to get from Halifax to here on the train. The miscarriages.

They heard her say that Reuel was afraid for her to have another baby.

"So now he always uses protections."

There were people who said they never went into that store anymore because you never knew what you'd have to listen to, or when you'd get out.

In all but the worst weather Margot and Anita lingered at the spot where they had to separate. They spun the day out a little longer, talking. Any subject would do. Did the geography teacher look better with or without his

GERMAN NUDISTS, KALAMAKI, CRETE

These are the true worshippers of light.
Motion is latent in them, in the rhythmic stillness
where the Libyan Sea comes hooded from Africa,
where they lie in couples by the milky shelves,
nipple and foreskin blackened, like lotus-eaters
under the scrub oak. Caesar admired their fortitude
crossing hyperborean rivers. A torque
of water cables over the tapering scorched
limbs. The stream laughs over a bed of rubble,
then disappears. The palace was reduced
long ago by the aggressors' fire. Those gods
being dead, a few celestial degrees absorb them.
They turn with shadow. Purpose moves in them as water
or oil or blood did once with a forgotten momentum
through the elbowed runnels at Ayia Triada.

—KARL KIRCHWEY

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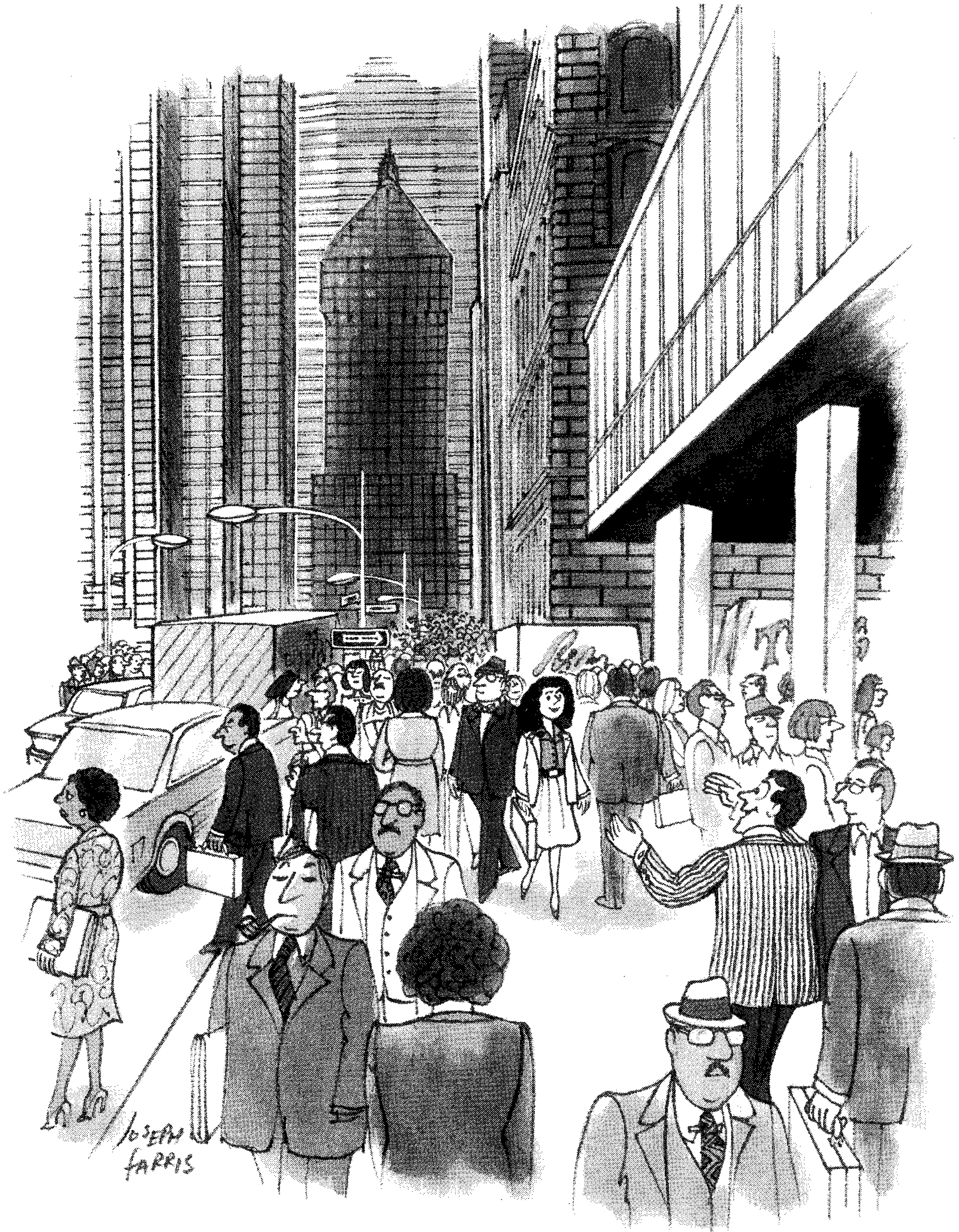
mustache? Did Teresa and Reuel still actually carry on, as Teresa implied? They talked so easily and endlessly that it seemed they talked about everything. But there were things they held back.

Anita held back two ambitions of hers which she did not reveal to anybody. One of them—to be an archeologist—was too odd, and the other—to be a fashion model—was too conceited. Margot told her ambition, which was to be a nurse. You didn't need any money to get into it—not like university—and once you graduated you could go anywhere and get a job. New York City, Hawaii—you could get as far away as you liked.

The thing that Margot kept back, Anita thought, was how it must really be at home, with her father. According to her, it was all like some movie comedy. Her father beside himself, a hapless comedian, racing around in vain pursuit (of fleet, mocking Margot) and rattling locked doors (the granary) and shouting monstrous threats and waving over his head whatever weapon he could get hold of—a chair or a hatchet or a stick of firewood. He tripped over his own feet and got mixed up in his own accusations. And no matter what he did, Margot laughed. She laughed, she despised him, she forestalled him. Never, never did she shed a tear or cry out in terror. Not like her mother. So she said.



"If it isn't Michelle and a cast of thousands!"

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AFTER Anita graduated as a nurse, she went to work in the Yukon. There she met and married a doctor. This should have been the end of her story, and a good end, too, as things were reckoned in Walley. But she got a divorce, she moved on. She worked again and saved money and went to the University of British Columbia, where she studied anthropology. When she came home to look after her mother, she had just completed her Ph.D. She did not have any children.

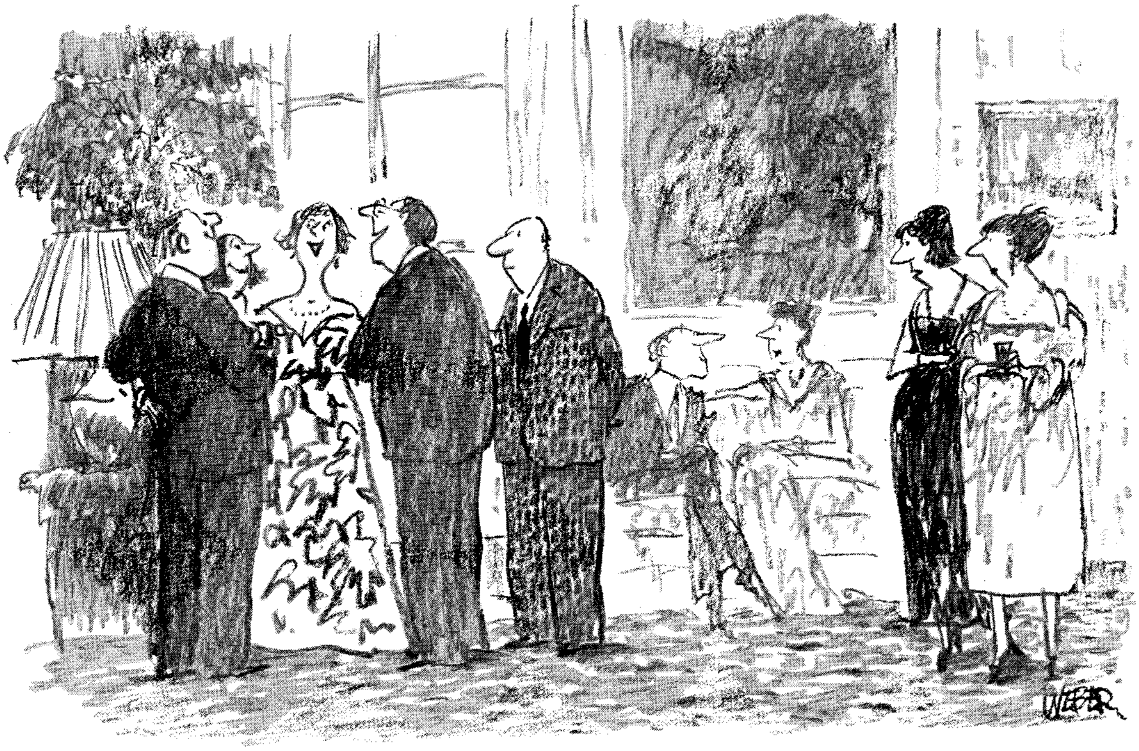
"So what will you do, now you're through?" said Margot.

People who approved of the course Anita had taken in life usually told her so. Often an older woman would say, "Good for you!" or, "I wish I'd had the nerve to do that, when I was still young enough for it to make any difference." Approval came sometimes from unlikely quarters. It was not to be found everywhere, of course. Anita's mother did not feel it, and that was why, for many years, Anita had not come home. Even in her present sunken, hallucinatory state her mother had recognized her, and gathered her strength to mutter, "Down the drain."

Anita bent closer.

"*Life*," her mother said. "Down the *drain*."

But another time, after Anita had



"In the area of human relations, Lewis is a minimalist."

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dressed her sores, she said, "So glad. So glad to have—a *daughter*."

Margot didn't seem to approve or disapprove. She seemed puzzled, in an indolent way. Anita began talking to her about some things she might do, but they kept being interrupted. Margot's sons had come in, bringing friends. The sons were tall, with hair of varying redness. Two of them were in high school and one was home from college. There was one even older, who was married and living in the west. Margot was a grandmother. Her sons carried on shouted conversations with her about the whereabouts of their clothes, and what supplies of food, beer, and soft drinks there were in the house, also which cars would be going where at what times. Then they all went out to swim in the pool beside the house, and Margot called, "Don't anybody dare go in that pool that's got suntan lotion on!"

One of the sons called back, "Nobody's *got* it on," with a great show of weariness and patience.

"Well, somebody had it on yesterday, and they went in the pool, all right," replied Margot. "So I guess it was just somebody that snuck up from the beach, eh?"

Her daughter, Debbie, arrived home from dancing class and showed them the costume she was going to wear when her dancing school put on a program at the shopping mall. She was to impersonate a dragonfly. She was ten years old, brown-haired, and stocky, like Margot.

"Pretty hefty dragonfly," said Margot, lolling back in the deck chair. Her daughter did not arouse in her the warring energy that her sons did. Debbie tried for a sip of the sangria, and Margot batted her away lazily.

"Go get yourself a drink out of the fridge," she said. "Listen. This is our visit. O.K.? Why don't you go phone up Rosalie?"

Debbie left, trailing an automatic complaint. "I wish it wasn't pink lemonade. Why do you always make pink lemonade?"

Margot got up and shut the sliding doors to the kitchen. "Peace," she said. "Drink up. After a while I'll get us some sandwiches."

SPRING in that part of Ontario comes in a rush. The ice breaks up into grinding, jostling chunks on the rivers and along the lakeshore, it slides underwater in the pond and turns the water green. The snow melts and the creeks flood and in no time comes a day when you open your coat and stuff your scarf and mittens in your pockets. There is still snow in the woods when the black flies are out and the spring wheat showing.

Teresa didn't like spring any better than winter. The lake was too big and the fields too wide and the traffic went by too fast on the highway. Now that the mornings had turned balmy, Margot and Anita didn't need the store's shelter. They were tired of Teresa. Anita read in a magazine that coffee discolored your skin. They talked about whether miscarriages could cause chemical changes in your brain. They stood outside the store, wondering whether they should go in, just to be polite. Teresa came to the door and waved at them, peekaboo. They waved back with a little flap of their hands the way Reuel waved back every morning—just lifting a hand from the steering wheel at the last moment before he turned onto the highway.

Reuel was singing in the bus one afternoon when he had dropped off all the other passengers. "He knew the world was round-o," he sang. "And uh-uhm could be found-o."

He was singing a word in the second line so softly they couldn't catch it. He was doing it on purpose, teasing. Then he sang it again, loud and clear so that there was no mistake.

He knew the world was round-o,
And tail-o could be found-o.

They didn't look at each other or say anything till they were walking down the highway. Then Margot said, "Big fat nerve he's got, singing that song in front of us. Big fat *nerve*," she said, spitting the word out like the worm in an apple.

But only the next day, shortly before the bus reached the end of its run, Margot started humming. She invited Anita to join, poking her in the side and rolling her eyes. They hummed the tune of Reuel's song, then they started working words into the humming, muffling one word, then clearly singing the next, until they finally got their courage up and sang the whole two lines, bland and sweet as "Jesus Loves Me."

He knew the world was round-o,
And tail-o could be found-o.

Reuel did not say a word. He didn't look at them. He got off the bus ahead of them and didn't wait by the door. Yet less than an hour before, in the school driveway, he had been most genial. One of the other drivers looked at Margot and Anita and said, "Nice load you got there," and Reuel said, "Eyes front, Buster," moving so that the other driver could not watch them stepping onto the bus.

Next morning before he pulled away from the store, he delivered a lecture. "I hope I'm going to have a couple of ladies on my bus today and not like yesterday. A girl saying certain things is not like a man saying them. Same thing as a woman getting drunk. A girl gets drunk or talks dirty, first thing you know she's in trouble. Give that some thought."

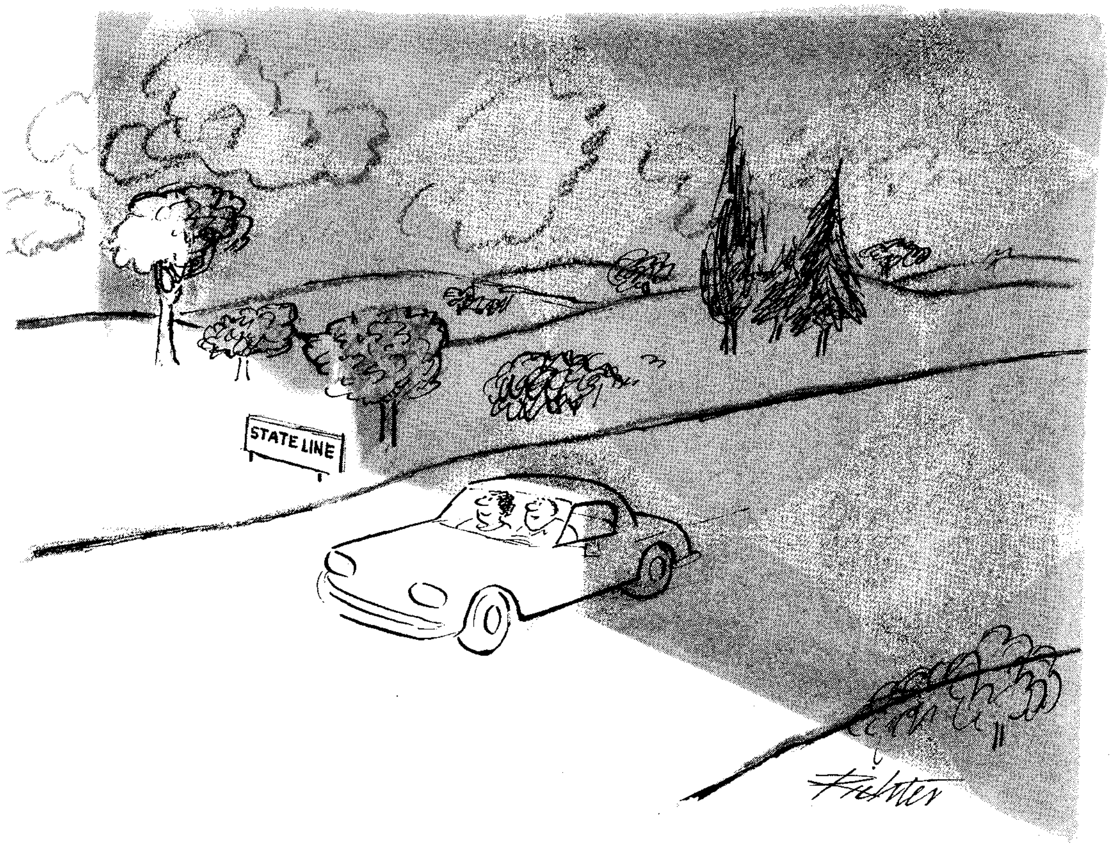
Anita wondered if they had been stupid. Had they gone too far? They had displeased Reuel and perhaps disgusted him, made him sick of the sight of them, just as he was sick of Teresa. She was ashamed and regretful and at the same time she thought Reuel wasn't fair. She made a face at Margot to indicate this, turning down the corners of her mouth. But Margot took no notice. She was tapping her fingertips together, looking demurely and cynically at the back of Reuel's head.

ANITA woke up in the night with an amazing pain. She thought at first she'd been wakened by some calamity, such as a tree falling on the house or flames shooting up through the floorboards. This was shortly before the end of the school year. She had felt sick the evening before, but everybody in the family was complaining of feeling sick, and blaming it on the smell of paint and turpentine. Anita's mother was painting the linoleum, as she did every year at this time.

Anita had cried out with pain before she was fully awake, so that everybody was roused. Her father did not think it proper to phone the doctor before daybreak, but her mother phoned him anyway. The doctor said to bring Anita in to Walley, to the hospital. There he operated on her and removed a burst appendix, which in a few hours might have killed her. She was very sick for several days after the operation, and had to stay nearly three weeks in the hospital. Until the last few days, she could not have any visitors but her mother.

This was a drama for the family. Anita's father did not have the money to pay for the operation and the stay in hospital—he was going to have to sell a stand of hard-maple trees. Her mother took the credit, rightly, for saving Anita's life, and as long as she lived she would mention this, often adding that she had gone against her husband's orders. (It was really only against his advice.) In a flurry of independence and self-esteem she began to drive the car, a thing she had not done for years. She visited Anita every afternoon and brought news from home. She had finished painting the linoleum, in a design of white and yellow done with a sponge on a dark-green ground. It gave the impression of a distant meadow sprinkled with tiny flowers. The milk inspector had complimented her on it, when he stayed for dinner. A late calf had been born across the creek and nobody could figure out how the cow had got there. The honeysuckle was in bloom in the hedge, and she brought a bouquet and commandeered a vase from the nurses. Anita had never seen her sociability turned on like this before for anybody in the family.

Anita was happy, in spite of weakness and lingering pain. Such a fuss had been made to prevent her dying. Even the sale of the maple trees pleased her, made her feel unique and treasured. People were kind and asked nothing of her, and she took up that kindness and extended it to everything



"They have very strict anti-pollution laws in this state."

around her. She forgave everyone she could think of—the principal with his glittery glasses, the smelly boys on the bus, unfair Reuel and chattering Teresa and rich girls with lamb's-wool sweaters and her own family and Margot's father, who must suffer in his rampages. She didn't tire all day of looking at the thin yellowish curtains at the window and the limb and trunk of a tree visible to her. It was an ash tree, with strict-looking corduroy lines of bark and thin petal leaves that were losing their fragility and sharp spring green, toughening and darkening as they took on summer maturity. Everything made or growing in the world seemed to her to deserve congratulations.

She thought later that this mood of hers might have come from the pills they gave her, for the pain. But perhaps not entirely.

She had been put in a single room because she was so sick. (Her father had told her mother to ask how much extra this was costing, but her mother didn't think they would be charged, since they hadn't asked for it.) The nurses brought her magazines, which she looked at but could not read, being too dazzled and comfortably distracted. She couldn't tell whether time passed quickly or slowly, and she didn't care. Sometimes she dreamed or imagined that Reuel visited her. He showed a sombre tenderness, a muted passion. He loved but relinquished her, caressing her hair.

A couple of days before she was due to go home, her mother came in shiny-faced from the heat of summer, which was now upon them, and from some other disruption. She stood at the end of Anita's bed and said, "I always knew you thought it wasn't fair of me."

By this time Anita had felt a few holes punched in her happiness. She had been visited by her brothers, who banged against the bed, and her father, who seemed surprised that she expected to kiss him, and by her aunt, who said that after an operation like this a person always got fat. Now her mother's face, her mother's voice, came pushing at her like a fist through gauze.

Her mother was talking about Margot. Anita knew by a twitch of her mouth.

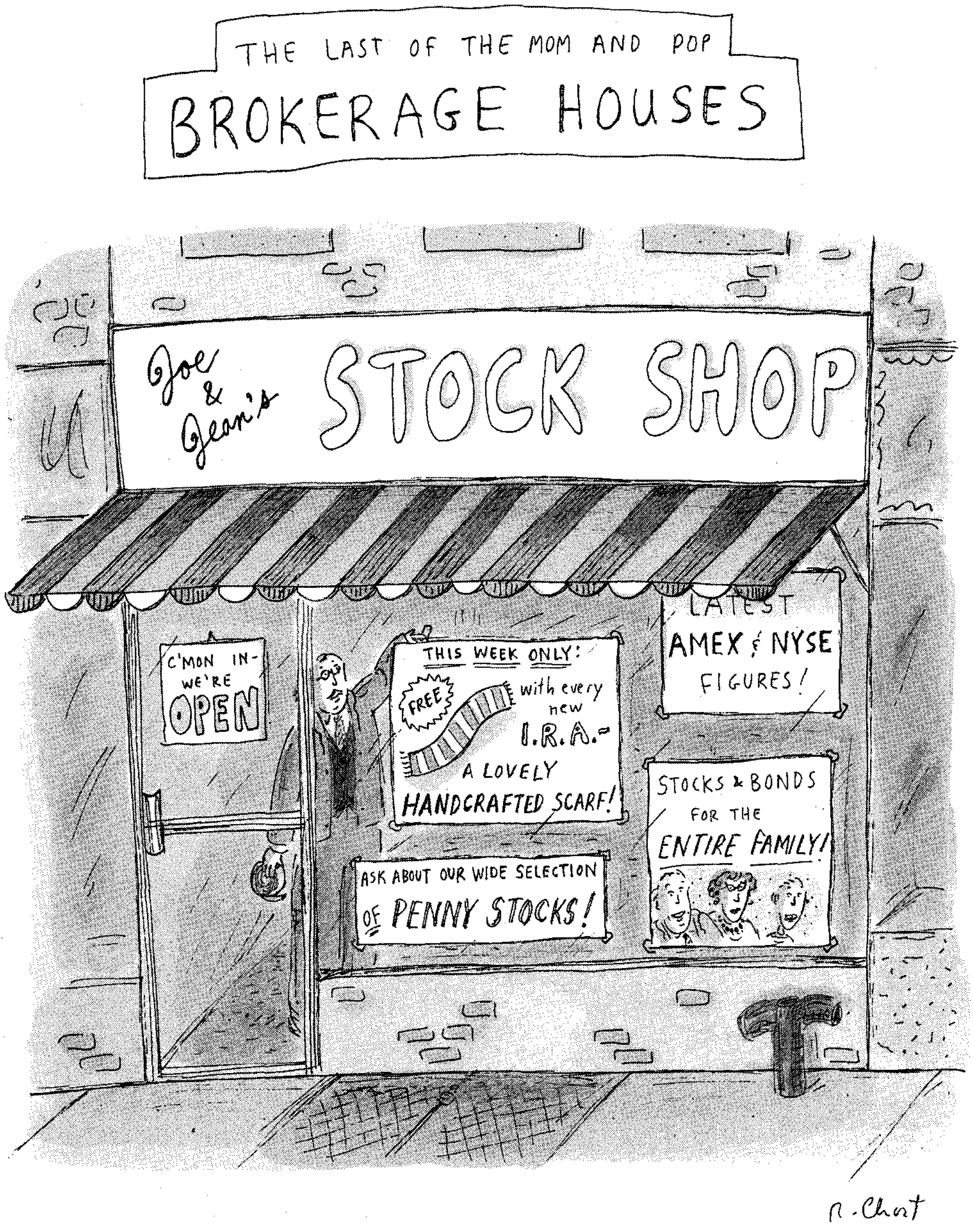
"You always thought I wasn't fair to your friend Margot. I was never fussy about that girl and you thought I wasn't fair. I know you did. So now it turns out. It turns out I wasn't so wrong after all. I could see it in her from an early age. I could see what you couldn't. That she had a sneaky streak and she was oversexed."

Her mother delivered each sentence separately, in a reckless loud voice. Anita did not look at her eyes. She looked at the little brown mole beneath one nostril. It seemed increasingly loathsome.

Her mother calmed down a little, and said that Reuel had taken Margot to Kincardine on the school bus at the end of the day's run on the very last day of school. Of course they had been alone in the bus at the beginning and the end of the run, ever since Anita got sick. All they did in Kincardine, they said, was eat French-fried potatoes. What nerve! Using a school bus for their jaunts and misbehaving. They drove back that evening, but Margot did not go home. She had not gone home yet. Her father had come to the store and beat on the gas pumps and broken them, scattering glass as far as the highway. He phoned the police about Margot, and Reuel phoned them about the pumps. The police were friends of Reuel's, and now Margot's father was bound over to keep the peace. Margot stayed on at the store, supposedly to escape a beating.

"That's all it is, then," Anita said. "Stupid God-damned gossip."

But no. But no. And don't swear at me, young lady.


THE LAST OF THE MOM AND POP
BROKERAGE HOUSES
Joe & Jean's STOCK SHOP
C'MON IN- WE'RE OPEN
THIS WEEK ONLY: FREE with every new I.R.A.- A LOVELY HANDCRAFTED SCARF!
LATEST AMEX & NYSE FIGURES!
STOCKS & BONDS FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY!
ASK ABOUT OUR WIDE SELECTION OF PENNY STOCKS!
R. Chast

Her mother said that she had kept Anita in ignorance. All this had happened and she had said nothing. She had given Margot the benefit of the doubt. But now there was no doubt. The news was that Teresa had tried to poison herself. She had recovered. The store was closed. Teresa was still living there, but Reuel had taken Margot with him and they were living here, in Walley. In a back room somewhere, in the house of friends of his. They were living together. Reuel was going out to work at the garage every day, so you could say that he was living with them both. Would he be allowed to drive the school bus in future? Not likely. Everybody was saying Margot must be pregnant. Javex, was what Teresa took.

“We’ve just decided to put food back in its place.”

“And Margot never confided in you,” Anita’s mother said. “She never sent you a note or one thing all the time you’ve been in here. Supposed to be your friend.”

Anita had a feeling that her mother was angry at her not only because she’d been friends with Margot, a girl who had disgraced herself, but for another reason as well. She had the feeling that her mother was seeing the same thing that she herself could see—Anita unfit, passed over, disregarded, not just by Margot but by life. Didn’t her mother feel an angry disappointment that Anita was not the one chosen, the one enfolded by drama and turned into a woman and swept out on such a surge of life? She would never admit that. And Anita could not admit that she felt a great failure. She was a child, a know-nothing, betrayed by Margot, who had turned out to know a lot. She said sulkily, “I’m tired talking.” She pretended to fall asleep, so that her mother would have to leave.

Then she lay awake. She lay awake all night. The nurse who came in the next morning said, “Well, don’t you look like the last show on earth! Is it that incision bothering you? Should I see if I can get you back on the pills?”

“I hate it here,” Anita said.

“Do you? Well, you only have one more day till you can go home.”

“I don’t mean the hospital,” Anita said. “I mean *here*. I want to go and live somewhere else.”

The nurse did not seem to be surprised. “You got your grade twelve?” she said. “O.K. You can go in training. Be a nurse. All it costs is to buy your stuff. Because they can work you for nothing while you’re training. Then you can go and get a job anyplace. You can go all over the world.”

That was what Margot had said. And now Anita was the one who would become a nurse, not Margot. She made up her mind that day. But she felt that it was second best. She would rather have been chosen. She would rather have been pinned down by a man and his desire and the destiny that he arranged for her. She would rather have been the subject of scandal.

• •

“DO you want to know?” said Margot. “Do you want to know really how I got this house? I mean, I didn’t go after it till we could afford it. But you know with men—something else can always come first? I put in my time living in dumps. We lived one place, there was just that stuff, you know that under-carpeting stuff, on the floor? That brown hairy stuff looks like the skin off some beast? Just look at it and you can feel things crawling on you. I was sick all the time anyway. I was pregnant with Joe. This was in behind the Toyota place, only it wasn’t the Toyota then. Reuel knew the landlord. Of course. We got it cheap.”

But there came a day, Margot said. There came a day about five years ago. Debbie wasn’t going to school yet. It was in June. Reuel was going away for the weekend, on a fishing trip up to northern Ontario. Up to the French River, in northern Ontario. Margot had got a phone call that she didn’t tell anybody about.

“Is that Mrs. Gault?”

Margot said yes.

“Is it Mrs. Reuel Gault?”

Yes, said Margot, and the voice—it was a woman’s or maybe a young girl’s voice, muffled and giggling—asked her if she wanted to know where her husband might be found next weekend.

"You tell me," said Margot.

"Why don't you check out the Georgian Pines?"

"Fine," said Margot. "Where is that?"

"Oh, it's a campground," the voice said. "It's a real nice place. Don't you know it? It's up on Wasaga Beach. You just check it out."

That was about ninety miles to drive. Margot made arrangements for Sunday. She had to get a sitter for Debbie. She couldn't get her regular sitter, Lana, because Lana was going to Toronto on a weekend jaunt with members of the high-school band. She was able to get a friend of Lana's who wasn't in the band. She was just as glad that it turned out that way, because it was Lana's mother, Dorothy Slote, that she was afraid she might find with Reuel. Dorothy Slote did Reuel's bookkeeping. She was divorced, and so well known in Walley for her numerous affairs that high-school boys would call to her from their cars, on the street, "Dorothy Slot, she's hot to trot!" Sometimes she was referred to as Dorothy Slut. Margot felt sorry for Lana—that was why she had started hiring her to take care of Debbie. Lana was not going to be as good-looking as her mother, and she was shy and not too bright. Margot always got her a little present at Christmastime.

BEDTIME STORY

The sound effects were really very simple: a creaky leather wallet—
Here, the speaker reached into his pocket and produced the very article—
Might stand for the marching boots of the Seven Dwarfs. Almost instantly,
I stepped into my father's creased, enormous shoes, their puckered insole ridges:
Cold, cold, so many hours until he comes back trudging through the snow,
The empty canvas sack around his neck; but never empty-handed—always promises
Of stories, or postcards left in limbo, *Not Known at This Address.* On the back,
You'll never guess who I met here—I'll tell you all about it when I see you.
Or bits of hairy twine come snaking out, the same gruff texture
As his navy-blue, tobacco-scented serge. The braid. The black mirror of his cap peak.

And in the ink-dark celluloid confused images of the narrative appear:
Disney's artists gather round like dwarfs, or ravens, as Disney
Flaps his arms to illustrate the story. He imitates a talking bird.
His hand opens and shuts like a beak. He gets them to do the same, to feel
The movement, the whole body swept along in mimicry, as they get it down
On paper. *He seemed to make it up as he went along.* Or maybe these were dreams,
Rehearsed for nights until they dawned into a blue configuration
Set off by floating, regal clouds; as if, already spoken for and animated,
The day proclaimed its destination, knowing what was coming next. The way
A flock of birds will make a fist. Which flits open, shuts again, then vanishes.

For the blue is the sky of an airmail letter, the clouds are puffs of smoke
Which punctuate my father's story. I see his fingernail is stained with nicotine,
Or maybe that's a trick of the light, the yellowish burnt umber which precedes
A thunderstorm. He is sprawled out on the sofa, I am in the rowing boat
Between his knees. A squall will figure shortly, summoned up from nowhere;
As this episode draws to a close, the castaway will cling to broken spars,
The tatters of his once proud enterprise. By the island of tomorrow he will know
If he is drowned or saved; as yet, he's in the dark, treading amber water.
And now the time-lapsed, wind-torn envelope is swallowed in the cobalt night,
My father lies asleep; he's been abroad since early morning.

His hands are folded on his chest, as if fastened on a rosary.
He has gathered silence over him, like his overcoat I drape around me.
I feel its snowbound, dangling weight, the broad cuffs where my hands are lost,
The trailing hem. The regal crown of his cap. The cool damp headband.
I touch the shining peak. Then the coarse weave of the sack. The glinting buckles.
I put on the leather harness. I step into the shoes again, and walk. I will deliver
Letters, cards, important gifts. I roll up a sleeve, and put my hand into his pocket.
His wallet. I open up its creaking leather palms, and I am rich:
I see myself in this, his photograph of me. He coughs, and stirs; his hands
Begin to sleepwalk, as if managing Pinocchio's wooden limbs.

—Ciarán Carson

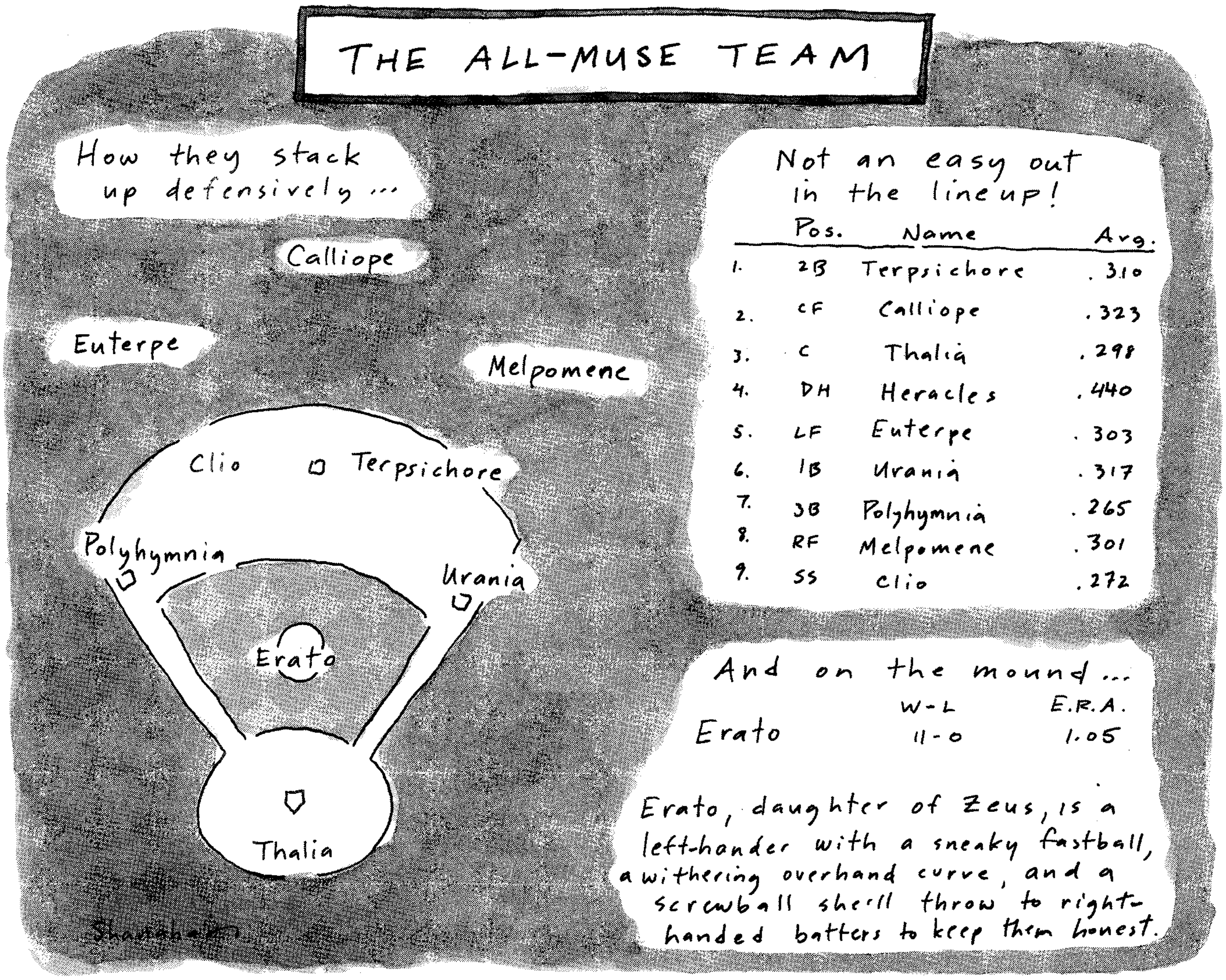
• •

On Saturday afternoon Margot drove to Kincardine. She was gone only a couple of hours, so she let Joe and his girlfriend take Debbie to the beach. In Kincardine she rented another car—a van, as it happened, an old blue crockpot of a thing like what the hippies drove. She also bought a few cheap clothes and a rather expensive, real-looking wig. She left them in the van, parked in a lot behind a supermarket. On Sunday morning she drove her car that far, parked it in the lot, got into the van and changed her clothes and donned the wig, as well as some extra makeup. Then she continued driving north.

The wig was a nice light-brown color, ruffled up on top and long and straight in the back. The clothes were tight pink denim pants and a pink-and-white striped top. Margot was thinner then, though not *thin*. Also, buffalo sandals, dangly earrings, big pink sunglasses. The works.

"I didn't miss a trick," said Margot. "I did my eyes up kind of Cleopatra-ish. I don't believe my own kids could've recognized me. The mistake I made was those pants—they were too tight and too hot. Them and the wig just about killed me. Because it was a blazing hot day. And I was kind of awkward at parking the van, because I'd never driven one before. Otherwise, no problems."

She drove up Highway 21, the Bluewater, with the window down to get a breeze off the lake, and her long hair blowing and the van radio tuned to a rock station, just to get her in the mood. In the mood for what? She had



Not an easy out in the lineup!

	Pos.	Name	Avg.
1.	2B	Terpsichore	.310
2.	CF	Calliope	.323
3.	C	Thalia	.298
4.	DH	Heracles	.440
5.	LF	Euterpe	.303
6.	1B	Urania	.317
7.	3B	Polyhymnia	.265
8.	RF	Melpomene	.301
9.	SS	Clio	.272

And on the mound . . .

	W-L	E.R.A.
Erato	11-0	1.05

Erato, daughter of Zeus, is a left-hander with a sneaky fastball, a withering overhand curve, and a screwball she'll throw to right-handed batters to keep them honest.

• •

no idea. She smoked one cigarette after another, trying to steady her nerves. Men driving along kept honking at her. Of course the highway was busy, of course Wasaga Beach was jammed, a bright, hot Sunday like this, in June. Around the beach the traffic was just crawling, and the smell of French fries and noon-hour barbecues pressed down like a blanket. It took her a while just to find the campground, but she did, and paid her day fee, and drove in. Round and round the parking lot she drove, trying to spot Reuel's car. She didn't see it. Then it occurred to her that the lot would be just for day visitors. She found a parking place.

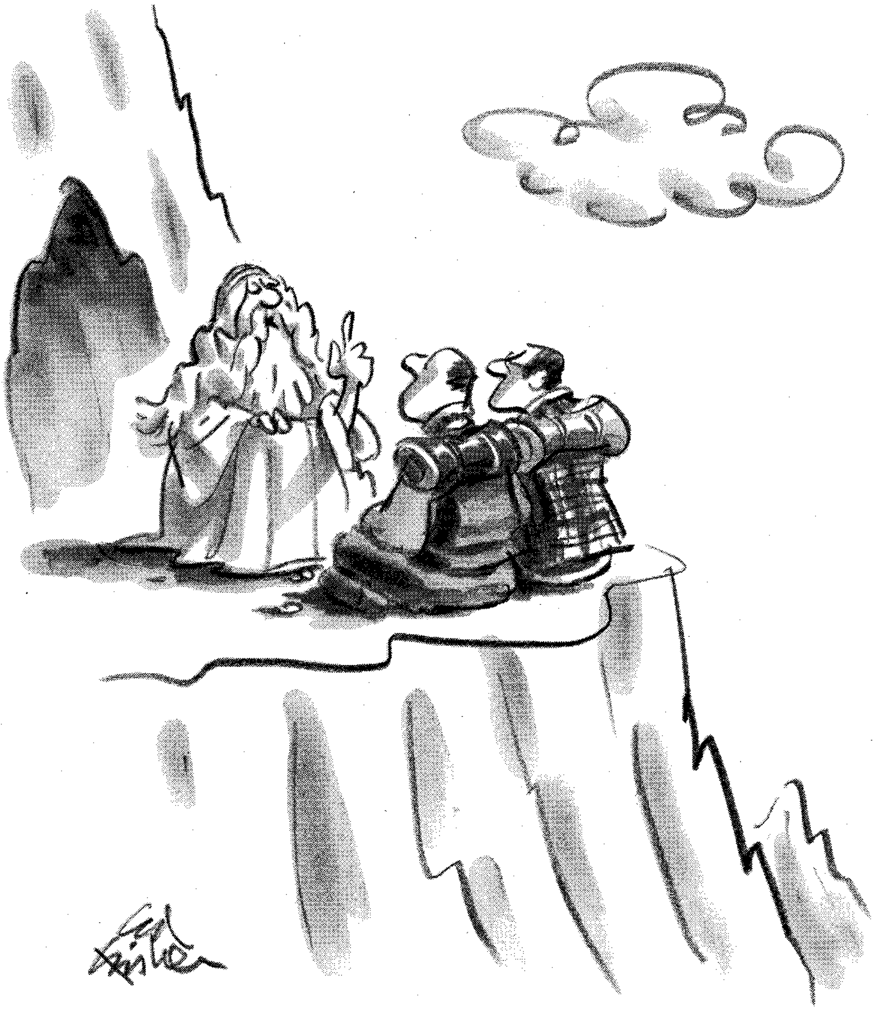
Now she had to reconnoitre the entire grounds, on foot. She walked first all through the campground part. Trailer hookups, tents, people sitting out beside the trailers and tents drinking beer and playing cards and barbecuing lunch—more or less just what they would have been doing at home. There was a central playground, with swings and slides kept busy, and kids throwing Frisbees, and babies in the sandbox. A refreshment stand, where Margot got a Coke. She was too nervous to eat anything. It was strange to her to be in a family place yet not part of any family.

Nobody whistled or made remarks to her. There were lots of long-haired girls around showing off more than she did. And you had to admit that what they had was in better condition to be shown.

She walked the sandy paths under the pines, away from the trailers. She came to a part of the grounds that looked like an old resort, probably there long before anybody ever thought of trailer hookups. The shade of the big pines was a relief to her. The ground underneath was brown with their needles—hard dirt had turned to a soft and furry dust. There were double cabins and single cabins, painted dark green. Picnic tables beside them. Stone fireplaces. Tubs of flowers in bloom. It was nice.

There were cars parked by some of the cabins, but Reuel's wasn't there. She didn't see anybody around—maybe the people who stayed in cabins were the sort who went down to the beach. Across the road was a place with a bench and a drinking fountain and a trash can. She sat down on the bench to rest.

And out he came. Reuel. He came out of the cabin right across from where she was sitting. Right in front of her nose. He was wearing his bathing trunks and he had a couple of towels slung over his shoulders. He walked in a lazy, slouching way. A roll of white fat sloped over the waistband of his trunks. "Straighten up at least!" Margot wanted to yell at him. Was he slouching like that because he felt sneaky and ashamed? Or just worn out with happy exercise? Or had he been



"Every living thing is changed, owing to the advent of cable."

• •

slouching for a long time and she hadn't noticed? His big strong body turning into something like custard.

He reached into the car parked beside the cabin, and she knew he was reaching for his cigarettes. She knew, because at the same moment she was fumbling in her bag for hers. If this was a movie, she thought—if this was only a movie, he'd come springing across the road with a light, keen to assist the stray pretty girl. Never recognizing her, while the audience held its breath. Then recognition dawning, and horror—incredulity and horror. While she the wife sat there cool and satisfied, drawing deep on her cigarette. But none of this happened, of course none of it happened, he didn't even look across the road. She sat sweating in her denim pants, and her hands shook so that she had to put her cigarette away.

The car wasn't his. What kind of car did Dorothy Slut drive?

Maybe he was with somebody else, somebody totally unknown to Margot, a stranger. Some stranger who figured she knew him as well as his wife.

No. No. Not unknown. Not a stranger. Not in the least a stranger. The door of the cabin opened again, and there was Lana Slote. Lana, who was supposed to be in Toronto with the band. Couldn't babysit Debbie. Lana, whom Margot had always felt sorry for and been kind to because she thought the girl was slightly lonesome, or unlucky. Because she thought it showed that Lana was brought up mostly by old grandparents. Lana seemed old-fashioned, prematurely serious without being clever, and not very healthy, as if she were allowed to live on soft drinks and sugared cereal and whatever mush of canned corn and fried potatoes and macaroni-and-cheese loaf those old people dished up for supper. She got bad colds with asthmatic complications, her complexion was dull and pale. But she did have a chunky, appealing little figure, well developed front and back, and chipmunk cheeks when she smiled, and silky, flat, naturally blond hair. She was so meek that even Debbie could boss her around, and the boys thought she was a joke.

Lana was wearing a bathing suit that her grandmother might have chosen for her. A shirred top over her bunchy little breasts and a flowered skirt. Her legs were stumpy, untanned. She stood there on the step as if she was afraid to come out—afraid to appear in a bathing suit or afraid to appear at all. Reuel had to go over and give her a loving little spank, to get her moving. With numerous lingering pats he arranged one of the towels around her shoulders. He touched his cheek to her flat blond head, then rubbed his nose in her hair, no doubt to inhale its baby fragrance. Margot watched it all.

They walked away, down the road to the beach, respectably keeping their distance. Father and child.

Margot observed now that the car was a rented one. From a place in Walkerton. How funny, she thought, if it had been rented in Kincardine, at the same place where she rented the van. She wanted to put a note under the windshield wiper, but she didn't have anything to write on. She had a pen but no paper. But on the grass beside the trash can she spied a Kentucky Fried Chicken bag. Hardly a grease spot on it. She tore it into pieces, and on the pieces she wrote—or printed, actually, in capital letters—these messages:

YOU BETTER WATCH YOURSELF, YOU COULD END UP IN JAIL.

THE VICE SQUAD WILL GET YOU IF YOU DON'T WATCH OUT.

PERVERTS NEVER PROSPER.

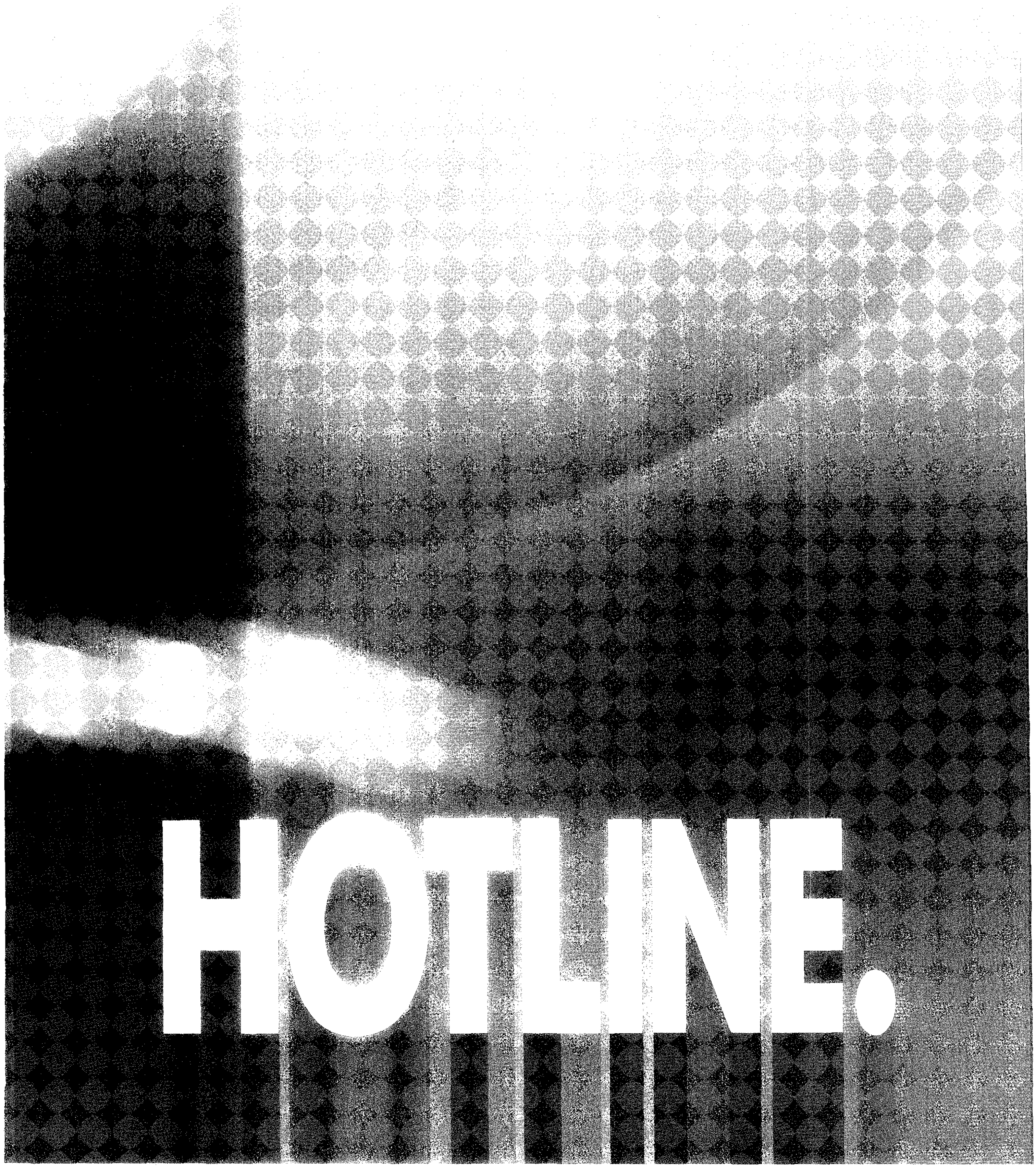
LIKE MOTHER LIKE DAUGHTER.

BETTER THROW THAT ONE BACK IN THE FRENCH RIVER, IT'S NOT FULL GROWN.

SHAME.

SHAME.

She wrote another that said "BIG FAT SLOB WITH YOUR BABY-FACED MORON," but she tore that up—she didn't like the tone of it. Hysterical. She stuck the notes where she was sure they would be found—under the windshield wiper, in the crack of the door, weighed down by stones on the picnic table. Then she hurried away with her heart racing. She drove so badly, at first, that she almost killed a dog before



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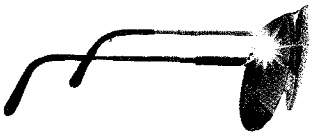

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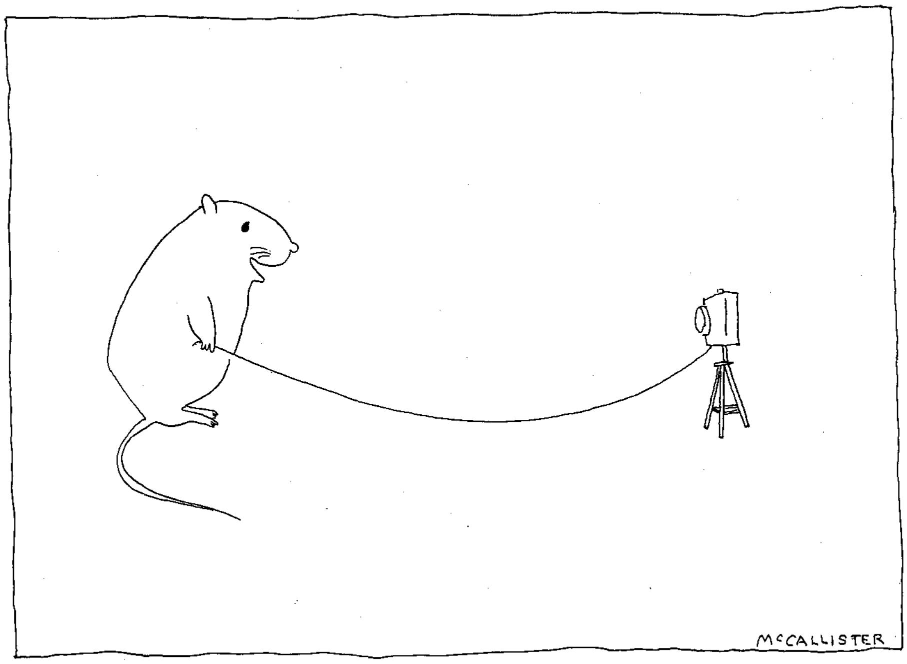

"Cheese."

• •

she got out of the parking lot. She did not trust herself on the highway, so she drove on back roads, gravel roads, and kept reminding herself to keep her speed down. She wanted to go fast. She wanted to take off. She felt right on the edge of blowing up, blowing to smithereens. Was it good or was it terrible, the way she felt? She couldn't say. She felt that she had been cut loose, nothing mattered to her, she was as light as a blade of grass.

But she ended up in Kincardine. She changed her clothes and took off the wig and rubbed the makeup off her eyes. She put the clothes and the wig in the supermarket trash bin—not without thinking what a pity—and she turned in the van. She wanted to go into the hotel bar and have a drink, but she was afraid of what it might do to her driving. And she was afraid of what she might do if any man saw her drinking alone and came up with the least remark to her. Even if he just said, "Hot day," she might yelp at him, she might try to claw his face off.

HOME. The children. Pay the sitter. A friend of Lana's. Could she be the one who had phoned? Get takeout for supper. Pizza—not Kentucky Fried, which she would never be able to think of again without being reminded. Then she sat up late, waiting. She had some drinks. Certain notions kept banging about in her head. Lawyer, Divorce, Punishment. These notions hit her like gongs, then died away without giving her any idea about how to proceed. What should she do first, what should she do next, how should her life go on? The children all had appointments of one kind or another, the boys had summer jobs, Debbie was about to have a minor operation on her ear. She couldn't take them away, she'd have to do it all herself, right in the middle of everybody's gossip—which she'd had enough of once before. Also, she and Reuel were invited to a big anniversary party next weekend, she had to get the present. A man was coming to look at the drains.

Reuel was so late getting home that she began to be afraid he'd had an accident. He'd had to go around by Orangeville, to deliver Lana to the home of her aunt. He'd pretended to be a high-school teacher transporting a member of the band. (The real teacher had been told, meanwhile, that Lana's aunt was sick and Lana was in Orangeville looking after her.) Reuel's stomach was upset, naturally, after those notes. He sat at the kitchen table chewing tablets and drinking milk. Margot made coffee, to sober herself for the fray.

Reuel said it was all innocent. An outing for the girl. As with Margot, he'd felt sorry for her. Innocent.

Margot laughed at that. She laughed, telling about it.

"I said to him, 'Innocent! I know your innocent! Who do you think you're talking to,' I said, 'Teresa?' And he said, '*Who?*' No, really. Just for a minute he looked blank, before he remembered. He said, '*Who?*' "

Margot thought then, What punishment? Who for? She thought he'd probably marry that girl and there'd be babies for sure and pretty soon not enough money to go around.

Before they went to bed at some awful hour in the morning, she had the promise of her house.

"Because there comes a time with men, they really don't want the hassle. They'd rather weasel out. I bargained him down to the wire, and I got pretty near everything I wanted. If he got balky about something later on, all I'd have to say was 'Wigtime!' I'd told him the whole thing—the wig and the van and where I sat and everything. I'd say that in front of the kids or anybody, and none of them would know what I was talking about. But he'd know. Reuel would know. *Wigtime!* I still say it once in a while, whenever I think it's appropriate."

She fished a slice of orange out of her glass and sucked, then chewed on it. "I put a little something else in this besides the wine," she said. "I put a little vodka, too. Notice?"

She stretched her arms and legs out in the sun.

"Whenever I think it's—appropriate."

Anita thought that Margot might have given up on vanity but she probably hadn't given up on sex. Margot might be able to contemplate sex without fine-looking bodies or kindly sentiments. A healthy battering.

And what about Reuel—what had he given up on? Whatever he did, it wouldn't be till he was ready. That was what all Margot's hard bargaining would really be coming up against—whether Reuel was ready or not. That was something he'd never feel obliged to tell her. So a woman like Margot can still be fooled—this was what Anita thought, with a momentary pleasure, a completely comfortable treachery—by a man like Reuel.

"Now you," said Margot, with an ample satisfaction. "I told you something. Time for you to tell me. Tell me how you decided to leave your husband."

Anita told her what had happened in a restaurant in British Colum-

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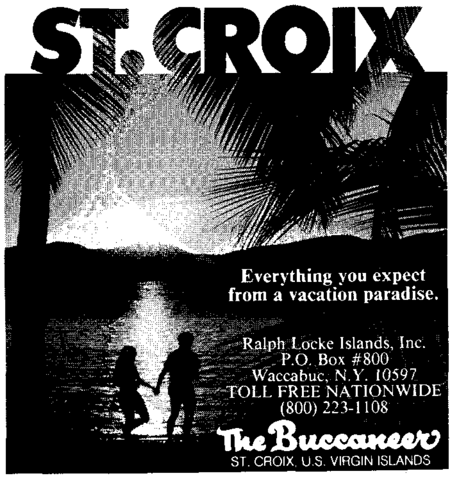
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HANDMADE IN EGYPT

bia. Anita and her husband, on a holiday, went into a roadside restaurant, and Anita saw there a man who reminded her of a man she had been in love with—no, perhaps she had better say infatuated with—years and years ago. The man in the restaurant had a pale-skinned, heavy face, with a scornful and evasive expression, which could have been a dull copy of the face of the man she loved, and his long-legged body could have been a copy of that man's body if it had been struck by lethargy. Anita could hardly tear herself away when it came time to leave the restaurant. She understood that expression—she felt that she was tearing herself away, she got loose in strips and tatters. All the way up the Island Highway, between the dark enclosing rows of tall fir and spruce trees, and on the ferry to Prince Rupert, she felt an absurd pain of separation. She decided that if she could feel such a pain, if she could feel more for a phantom than she could ever feel in her marriage, she had better go.

So she told Margot. It was more difficult than that, of course, and it was not so clear.

"Then did you go and find that other man?" said Margot.

"No. It was one-sided. I couldn't."

"Somebody else, then?"

"And somebody else, and somebody else," said Anita, smiling. The other night when she had been sitting beside her mother's bed, waiting to give her mother an injection, she had thought about men, putting names one upon another as if to pass the time, just as you'd name great rivers of the world, or capital cities, or the children of Queen Victoria. She felt regret about some of them but no repentance. Warmth, in fact, spread from the tidy buildup. An accumulating satisfaction.

"Well, that's one way," said Margot staunchly. "But it seems weird to me. It does. I mean—I can't see the use of it, if you don't marry them." She paused. "Do you know what I do, sometimes?" She got up quickly and went to the sliding doors. She listened, then opened the door and stuck her head inside. She came back and sat down.

"Just checking to see Debbie's not getting an earful," she said. "Boys, you can tell any horrific personal stuff in front of them and you might as well be speaking Hindu, for all they ever listen. But girls listen. Debbie listens. . . .

"I'll tell you what I do," she said. "I go out and see Teresa."

"Is she still there?" said Anita. "Is Teresa still out at the store?"

"What store?" said Margot. "Oh, no! No, no. The store's gone. The gas station's gone. Torn down years ago. Teresa's in the County Home. They have this what they call the Psychiatric Wing out there now. The weird thing is, she worked out there for years and years, just handing round trays and tidying up and doing this and that for them. Then she started having funny spells herself. So now she's sometimes sort of working there and she's sometimes just *there,* if you see what I mean. When she goes off she's never any trouble. She's just pretty mixed up. Talk-talk-talk-talk-talk. The way she always did, only more so. All she has any idea of doing is talk-talk-talk, and fix herself up. If you come and see her she always wants you to bring her some bath oil or perfume or makeup. Last time I went out I took her some of that highlight stuff for her hair. I thought that was taking a chance, it was kind of complicated for her to use. But she read the directions, she made out fine. She didn't make a mess. What I mean by mixed up is, she figures she's on the boat. The boat with the war brides. Bringing them all out to Canada."

"War brides," Anita said. Such a long time since she'd heard of them.

"You know what just flashed on my mind?" said Margot. "Just how the store used to look in the morning. And us coming in half froze."

Then she said in a flattened, disbelieving voice, "She used to come and beat on the door. Out there. Out there, when Reuel was with me in the room. It was awful. I don't know. I don't know—do you think it was love?"

From up here on the deck the two long arms of the breakwater look like floating matchsticks. The towers and pyramids and conveyor belts of the salt mine look like large solid toys. The lake is glinting like foil. Everything seems bright and distinct and harmless. Spellbound.

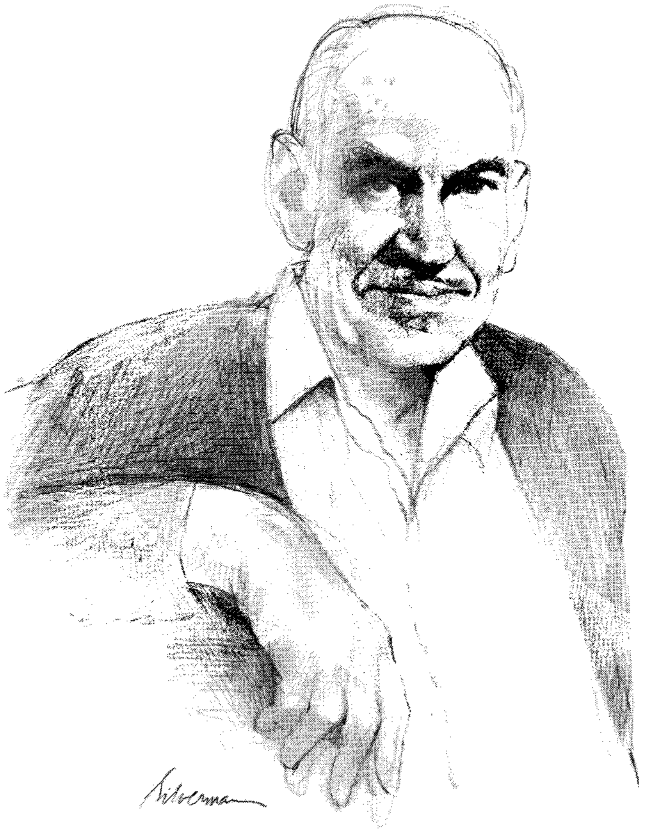
"We're all on the boat," says Margot. "She thinks we're all on the boat. But she's the one Reuel's going to meet in Halifax, lucky her."

Margot and Anita have got this far. They are not ready, yet, to stop talking. They are fairly happy.

—ALICE MUNRO

PROFILES

AT PLAY IN THE LANGUAGE



ONE of the best things about age, it is said, is that it can bring with it a certain perspective. At eighty-three, for example, Allen Walker Read has come to accept the likelihood that he will remain best known for an accomplishment that does not represent to him the pinnacle of his career. That achievement was tracking down the definitive origin of the most successful word in the American language, and perhaps the most successful word in the world, since it has migrated to almost every spot on the planet: the word "O.K."

This discovery of Read's has occasioned, over the last forty years, a slew of newspaper articles. It has been the cause of much gnashing of teeth by other etymologists, who had themselves lusted for the laurels of "O.K." It has been entered in the Second Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary—a consummation wished by every self-respecting etymologist. It was the subject of an article in *The New Yorker* in 1949 called "The Life and Times of O.K.," by H. L. Mencken, patron saint of those who study American English. Mencken called Read "a young man but an extremely learned and ingenious one," and Read admits that that reference was gratifying, since he'd grown up reading Mencken's *American Mercury* and idolizing his work.

Although "O.K." has drifted in and out of Read's life for much of his sixty-year career as an authority on the American language—through stints of compiling a dictionary on a Guggenheim Fellowship, a few years in the Army in the Second World War, and many years of teaching at Columbia University, where he was a professor of English from 1945 to 1974 and has been professor emeritus since—he undertook the search for the word partly as a lark. In 1941, several of his friends were putting together the Dictionary of American English, an American version of the O.E.D., on which Read had worked as a research assistant and later a research associate from 1932-38. "They were coming up on the 'O's, and I thought I'd see if I could find an earlier quotation of 'O.K.,' which would add some freshness to their entry," Read explains matter-of-factly. Although he now professes himself "almost a little tired of it, I've had to talk about it so much," it is tempting to see the "O.K." story as a paradigm of Read's career—and a paradigm, as well, of the way unsophisticated slang, coined in a waggish moment, can change the course of a language as profoundly as the most erudite and deliberate of words. Along the way, the search for "O.K." illustrates one other phenomenon, and that is that scholarly discoveries often proceed more speedily through the action of envy, competitiveness, and anger than through the pure-minded search for truth.

IN 1941, there were plenty of theories about "O.K.," but none was completely convincing. In fact, the trail to "O.K." was obscured almost as soon as the word came into being, for something about those two mysterious letters seemed to invite fanciful interpretations from all quarters. In 1840 alone, immediately after the word's first appearance (according to Read's evidence), "O.K." was said to stand for "only kissing," "orful kurious," "oll kounted," and "oll krazy." Some of these meanings were adopted just in fun, but their effect was to put up a wall around the true origin of "O.K."

One of the first serious explanations, dating from 1859, and one that hung on tenaciously in some quarters for more than a century, was that Andrew Jackson couldn't spell. This theory held that President Jackson, being an uneducated frontiersman, spelled the words "all correct" as "oll korrect," and jotted the initials "O.K." on papers as a sign of approval. Others suggested that "O.K." originated with the growing popularity of the telegraph in the eighteen-sixties, either as an abbreviation for "oll korrect" or to stand for the telegraphic expression "open key." A particularly persuasive and scholarly theory, put forth in 1885 by W. S. Wyman, a professor of English at the University of Alabama, suggested an American Indian origin, based on the Choctaw word *okeh* or *oke*, pronounced with the stress on the second syllable and used as an emphatic affirmative reply to a question. Wyman's theory brings in Andrew Jackson for good measure: Wyman postulated that Jackson picked up the word on his voyages up and down the Mississippi before the War of 1812 and later introduced it to the masses. The Choctaw explanation was plausible enough to be included in several important dictionaries at the beginning of the century, but it didn't stop other etymologies from being advanced.

There was, for example, Old Keokuk, referring to the famous Indian chief who reportedly signed treaties with "O.K." Then the "*aux cayes*" theory appeared, based on the Haitian port of Aux Cayes and its alleged reputation for exporting high-quality rum; thus, the story goes, the expression "*aux cayes*" became a symbol of quality or goodness, and was pronounced, of course, "okay." A similarly commercial theory cropped up in 1910: it held that "O.K." stood for Orrin Kendall, the manufacturer of a superior brand of Army biscuit, which he stamped with his initials. That was followed, in 1913, by the suggestion that "O.K." must come from the Greek *olla*, meaning "all," and *kalla*, meaning "good." One of the more recent and more tenacious etymologies, perhaps because it was based on an actual piece of paper that everyone could stare at, arose in 1938: in an 1815 entry in the handwritten journal of a Boston businessman named William Richardson there appeared a blotted mark that some scholars took to signify "O.K.," although it did not fit the meaning of the sentence it occurred in, and had not been found in any other writings of the time.

Clearly, when Read first undertook his research the definitive "O.K." had become an uncommon prize. But what the existing etymologies lacked, for all their ingenuity, was documentation. Word of mouth here, scratched-out scribbles there are not enough when it comes to putting word histories into dictionaries. To bring anything not only fresh but also meaningful to "O.K." Read had to do two things: he had to find the earliest use of "O.K.," and he had to document that use in cold, hard print and in a context that made it clear that it was the birth of the "O.K." we use today. But the hardest task of all, as it happened, was keeping ahead of the competition.

For evidence, Read turned to the ultimate processors of words: newspapers, a key source for etymological work throughout his career. Proceeding on the basis of research by others that pointed to the early eighteen-forties as an important period in the development of "O.K.," Read paged through newspapers of the time at the New-York Historical Society and found the term "Old Kinderhook." At first glance, the Old Kinderhook theory looks just as loony (or just as reasonable) as the Andrew Jackson theory or the Choctaw theory: "Old Kinderhook" ("O.K." for short) was a slogan in the ultimately unsuccessful 1840 reëlection campaign of Martin Van Buren, whose home town was Kinderhook, New York. Once Read had found the reference, the Kinderhook "O.K." seemed to turn up everywhere. This etymology had printed evidence; it had a historical context—and a history of its own that could be traced as the word grew in popularity and became the crowd-pleaser it is today.

In 1840, political practices were as Byzantine as they are now. But instead of political-action committees and televised debates politicians favored the creation of secret clubs with names that no outsider could understand: some of the Van Buren clubs, for instance, were called the Butt Enders, the Indomitables, the Huge Paws (their symbol was a muscular arm holding a hammer), and the Simon Pures. On March 23, 1840, a notice appeared in the *New Era*, a New York newspaper, of a meeting of a new society: the Democratic O.K. Club. That reference, the earliest one that Read found at the Historical Society, was the earliest fully documented use of "O.K."

It remained for Read to show how "O.K." went from "Old Kinderhook" to the "O.K." we know today. The first example of "O.K." that he found outside New York, and with a broader meaning, was in a letter from Vermont published in the *New Era* on April 27, 1840, in which the writer promised to bring about "the redemption of our State from British Whiggery next fall!" and added, "Will you not say 'O.K.'? Go ahead!" By the fall of 1840, as the Presidential campaign intensified, "O.K." was on its way west and into the national vocabulary. By Read's calculation, it had reached Ohio by September.

Read wrote up his findings for the July 19, 1941, issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and, for the most part, the scholarly world capitulated. He sent a draft of the article to Albert Matthews, a Boston-based expert on such Americanisms as "Indian summer," "lynch law," "favorite son," and "Uncle Sam," and a student of "O.K." for thirty years, as well as to Mencken; both Matthews and Mencken were won over. Mencken wrote to Read, "Needless to say, your article delights me. It seems to me to be plain that you solve the O.K. problem definitely and finally. . . . I have put in a lot of time myself investigating the matter, but never got anywhere."

With even the elder statesmen of the language convinced, Read was riding high. He concluded his *Saturday Review* article with a touch of hubris: "On the basis of the documentary evidence here presented, the many ingenious etymologies that have been put forward . . . must be thrown out of court. In the tracing of word history nothing can take the place of specific historical citations. These are now available for 'O.K.' "

But Read's triumph did not remain pristine for long—and the dark clouds came from an unexpected quarter. The editors of the D.A.E., the dictionary that had given Read his initial impetus for "freshening" the origin of "O.K.," told him they were planning to list the 1815 diary etymology before his own Kinderhook theory. Read had known of the D.A.E.'s fondness for the 1815 theory, but he had felt sure that his new information would relegate it to a mere footnote. He was enraged—though he would characteristically use the word "disappointed."

"To list the 1815 quotation as the first in the block of quotations . . . distorted the pattern of the evidence intolerably," he wrote in a later paper. Even before the Old Kinderhook discovery, Read had written to Woodford Heflin, the editor of the "O.K." entry, urging him not to use the 1815 citation, and now the correspondence became heated. Heflin suggested that because the diary writer Richardson had used the expression "all well" he probably also "sometimes thought in terms of O.K." Read responded, "Are you really so reckless, so insensitive to contexts, as to consider [all well and O.K.] interchangeable?" (He later wrote that "in the whole of linguistic literature, I cannot recall an argument more vulnerable" than Heflin's.) With Holmesian fervor, Read took a magnifying glass to the manuscript, and explained to Heflin that the ink had run down the fibres of the paper, "and the holding of the pen there in hesitation as to whether to continue would account for the change of an 'h' into a 'k.' "

After several months of writing long letters arguing the point, Read decided to play his trump card—to withhold his permission to use the Old Kinderhook material. To the editor-in-chief of the D.A.E. project, James Root Hulbert, Read laid out the philosophy underlying his act. "As I see it, there are three levels of loyalty involved," he wrote. "The lowest is to oneself, the second is to the best interests of the *Dictionary*, and the highest is to the best interests of scholarship. . . . It is a bitter disappointment to me that Mr. Heflin should be so shortsighted and uncritical as to sacrifice all higher interests to personal vanity. Lest it be said that I am equally uncritical, I may point out that I have expert opinion in agreement with my point of view, while Mr. Heflin, as far as I know, has none. For instance, Mr. Albert Matthews has recently written me that dealing with the 1815 quotation is 'flogging a dead horse.' Yet it is the stinking, putrid carcass of that same dead horse that Mr. Heflin intends to display as his principal exhibit."

Two months later, with the "O.K." entry already in galley proof, Read's stratagem worked: Hulbert overruled Heflin and removed the 1815 quotation from its lead position, relegating it to a small-type note. Read's Old Kinderhook etymology was restored. But Hulbert also took Read to task for his behavior, prompting Read to write once more to Heflin: "Professor Hulbert has written me, 'You are much less than just to Heflin'; and that would be true if my remarks were to be taken as referring to matters other than the O.K. business. In that, I think that you behaved very badly indeed. When Mr. Hulbert tells me that you have 'a host of good qualities,' I never for one moment doubted it. I am too civilized ever to 'get sore' or 'hold grudges'; I merely find myself to be 'disappointed' in certain people. That is the state I am in now." As apologies go, it was not exactly abject. And, in fact, the Read-

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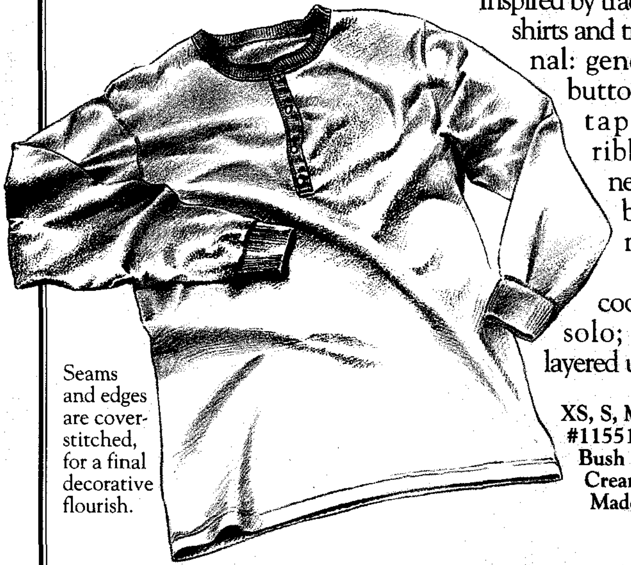

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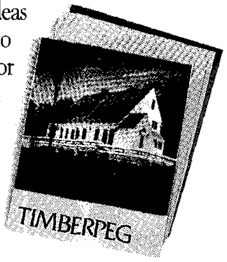

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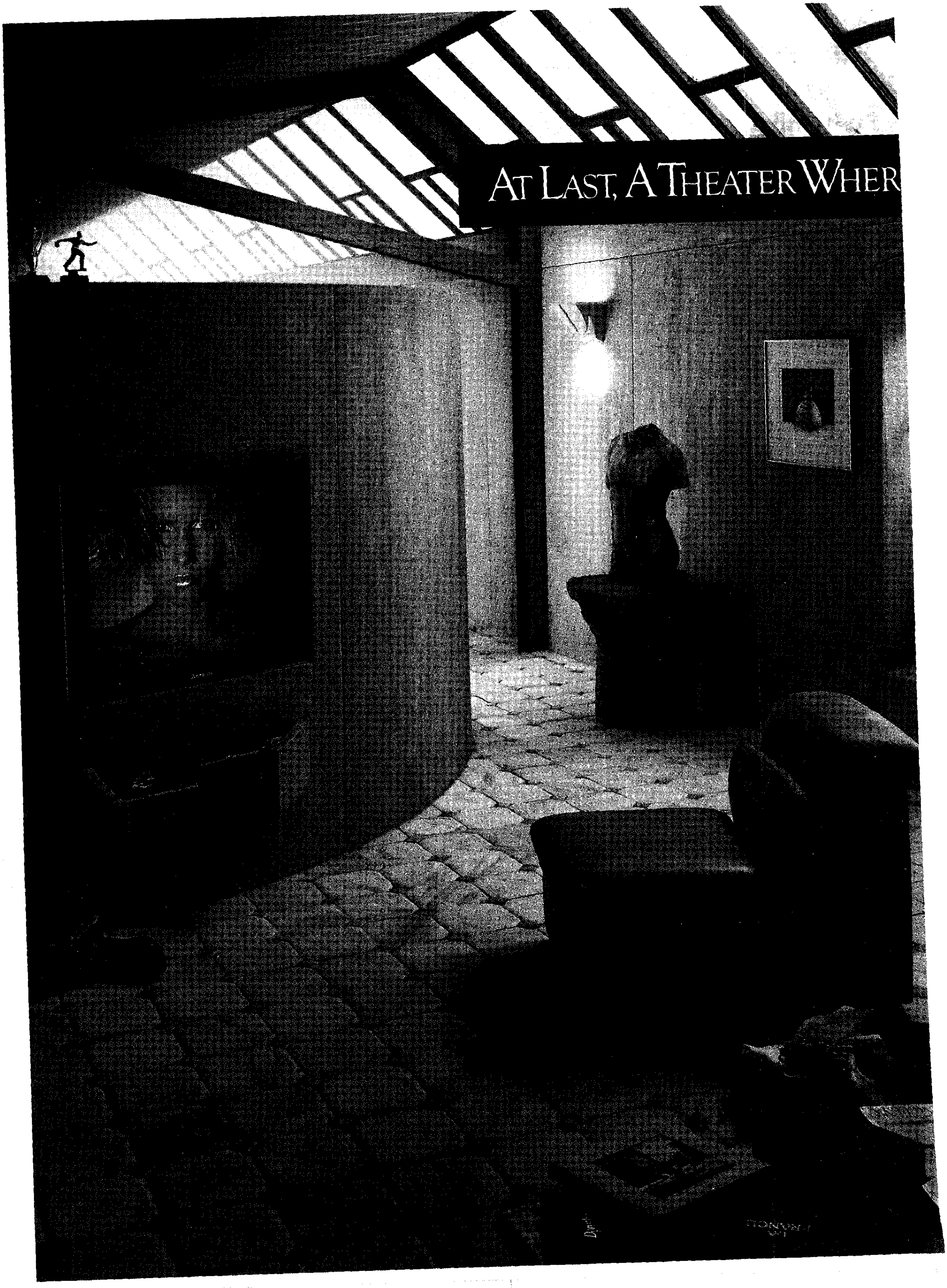
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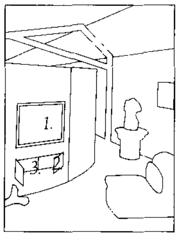

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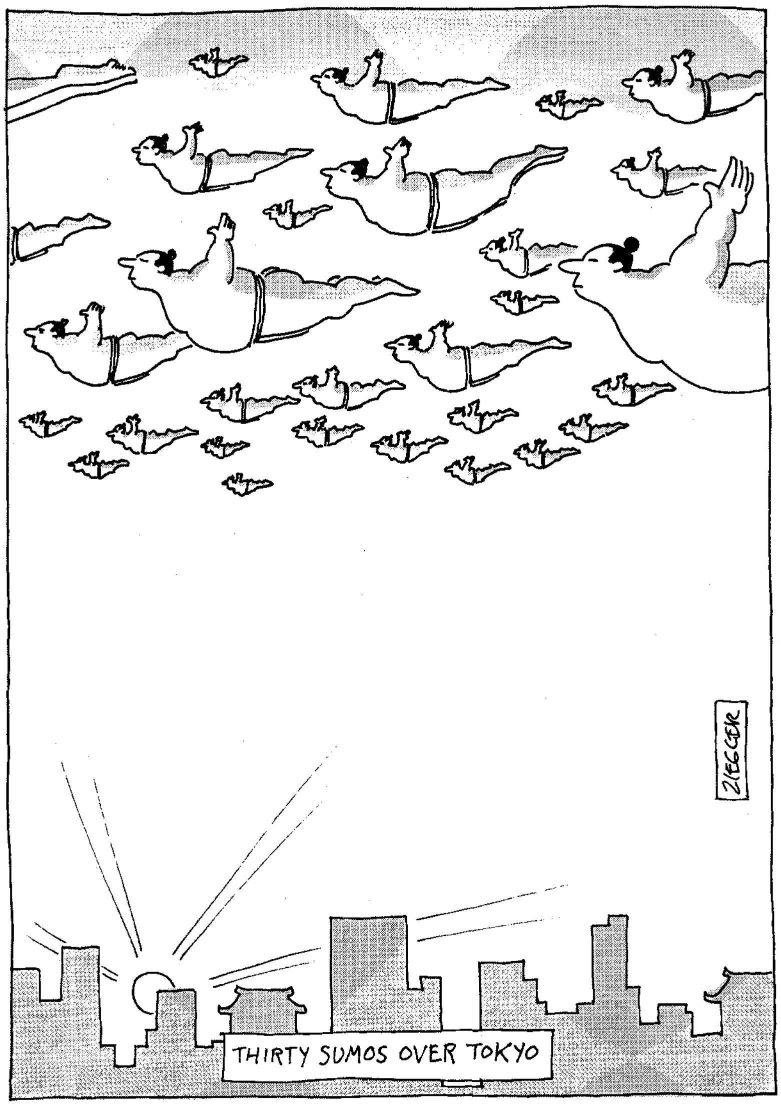
Heflin contention went on for decades afterward, a scuffle waged in the scholarly journals in terms that were as sharp as such environs permitted.

Even today, with the 1815 theory "thrown out of court," the diary entry rankles Read. One day in January, as he and I sat in his apartment, on the Upper West Side, discussing "O.K." ("if anyone's still interested," he said), he walked over to his files—a fancy word for the piles of cardboard boxes that fill the apartment's back bedroom and study. After thirty seconds of searching, he produced a photocopy of the offending diary entry. As we peered at the two key handwritten characters, blown up to about two inches in height, Read gave me his theory of what the letters really meant—that they could actually have represented the beginning of the words "a handsome," which Richardson never completed because he realized he had used the phrase earlier in the sentence.

It was this kind of doggedness that helped Read gain the field in 1941, but even his sometimes overstated confidence could not withstand the inevitable pressure of scholarly one-upmanship. After Old Kinderhook, there were still plenty of etymologists who wanted to see Read's evidence as the beginning rather than the end, and finally one of them found a chink in his armor. In 1950, Robert Gray Gunderson, a scholar who had just finished a doctoral dissertation on the Presidential campaign of 1840, came upon a citation for "O.K." that antedated Read's by a month. Gunderson's reference also involved a meaning that, although it had been bandied about in the context of other theories, had not been given much stature: "all correct" (or "oll korrect"). The issue was hot once again. By the time another decade had passed, Woodford Heflin had retaken the field by finding what Read called "an excellent example of 'O.K.' " from November 12, 1839. Heflin reported his finding in an article in 1962 that tore the Old Kinderhook derivation limb from limb. Read was not amused. And the next year he was back in print with another etymology for "O.K." that was earlier than any other.

To secure this etymology—the one that survives to this day—Read had to go even further into the psychology of the age. What he came up with was a story so steeped in the popular culture of 1839 as to sound absurd today. That story also, as it turns out, constitutes a clear example of one of Read's basic beliefs about language: that no word exists without a context—that the truth about language is most often to be found in the odd particulars of daily life and in the mouths of unselfconscious speakers—and that the spirit of play is a profound force in language development. "I think that in jubilance is an explanation for a lot of things that happen in language," he said the first time we met. And "O.K.," it finally became clear, was all about jubilance.

It started with a hot, hot summer in Boston in 1838—so hot that some of the barriers of respectability began to fall. People needed things to laugh at, and one joke they came up with was the use of initials to stand for phrases. The fad was picked up by the noted journalist Charles Gordon Greene in the Boston *Morning Post*, a staid journal that he was transforming into a lively record of everyday life. Among the biggest favorites in 1838 were such inside jokes as O.F.M. for "Our First Men" (meant to be taken satirically), N.G. ("No Go"), G.C. ("Gin Cocktail"), and the more elaborate twisters G.T.D.H.D. ("Give the Devil His Due") and O.K.K.B.W.P. ("One Kind Kiss Before We Part"). To make things even more complicated, deliberate misspellings were added to the brew: K.G. to stand for "No Go" spelled "Know Go," K.Y. standing for "No Use" spelled "Know Yuse." Out of this matrix, and no other, came the oddity O.K. to stand for "All Correct" (spelled "Oll Korrect")—a derivation that's hard to accept until you've read a few passages like this one, from the *Morning Post* of June 12, 1838: "We understand that J. Eliot Brown, Esq., Secretary of the Boston Young Men's Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Indians, F.A.H. (fell at Hoboken, N.J.) on Saturday last at 4 o'clock, P.M. in a duel W.O.O.O.F.C. (with one of our first citizens). What measures will be taken by the Society in consequence of this heart rending event, R.T.B.S. (remains to be seen)." Read suspects that "O.K." was in use orally in 1838, but the



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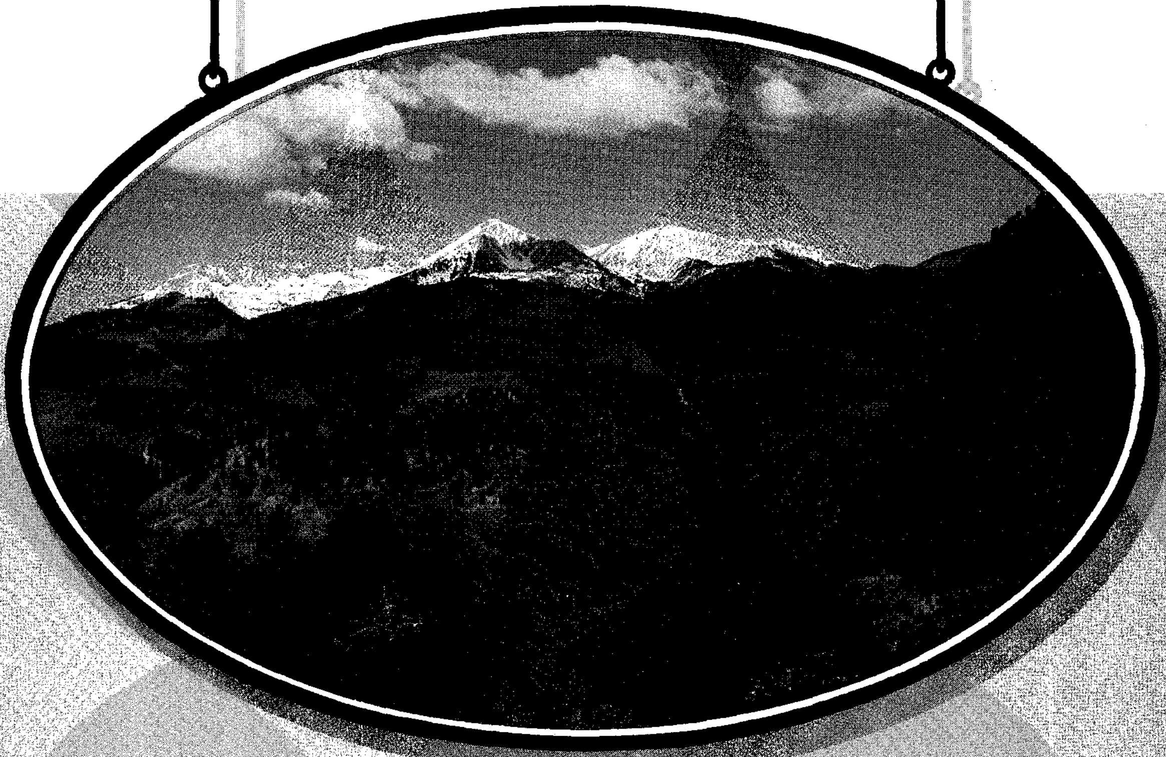

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first written evidence he found was in the *Post* for March 23, 1839.

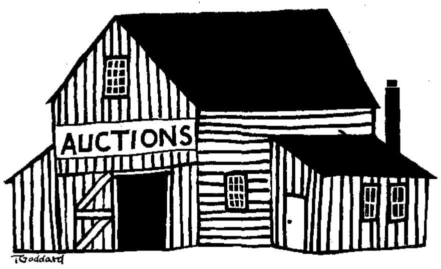
Between February of 1963 and December of 1964, Read published six articles in the magazine *American Speech*—what he calls his " 'O.K.' series"—describing not only the "first stage" and "second stage" of "O.K." ("oll korrect" and "Old Kinderhook") but every later stage of the "O.K." history, right up to the American astronauts' coining of "A-O.K.," in the early sixties. He also discussed, and dismissed, every competing etymology, and chronicled the particularly personal battles that had developed between him and Heflin in the forties. The "O.K." edifice is now firmly in place, and although the advancement of competing theories will probably never cease entirely (one that was raised in the late sixties, and dismissed by Read and others, claimed an African origin), it has faded to a murmur. And that means that Read can devote himself to the work of which "O.K." is a microcosm: the study of why we say things the way we do, and what our words say about us.

READ and his wife, Charlotte Schuchardt Read, live in a long, narrow, rambling apartment on Claremont Avenue, across the street from Barnard College and a block west of Columbia University. They have lived there since a week after they were married, in 1953, and the apartment's design and furnishings look unchanged from that time. This is the home of two people whose work is paramount: Charlotte Read is a scholar in general semantics. Everywhere, books, manuscripts, file folders, newspapers, and magazines take the place of more conventional furniture. Stacks of folders line the hallways, piles of magazines nestle in the living room's decorative fireplace, and Read's actual study, in the back of the apartment, is so full of boxes and files and papers that, as he admits, "two people can hardly get into it at one time." As we spoke in the living room one Saturday afternoon, Mrs. Read was tapping on a typewriter in the dining room (they customarily dine in the living room, on a table set near a window), providing a gentle accompaniment to our conversation.

Read himself, fifteen years into retirement, is still extremely active. Wearing what seems to be a trademark ensemble of plaid shirt and knit tie, and sitting close, because he has a little trouble hearing, he eagerly describes the eighteen speaking engagements he had last year, which took him from Cincinnati to Chicago to New Orleans. Read is so enthralled by his studies that, he says, he finds it hard to fit in other things: opera, theatre, trips to a country house the Reads own in Connecticut. (One of the things the Reads do fit in regularly is long walks —every Sunday, if the weather permits, with even the shortest covering six miles—which may help explain the physical energy that Read is still able to give to his work.)

New York City has been Read's home for fifty-one years—more than half his life—and yet, he says, "emotionally, I still feel myself to be a Middle Westerner." He was born in Winnebago, Minnesota, in 1906, the first of two children of a born-and-bred Midwestern couple—a sister, Mary Jo, was born in 1911—and spent his childhood and adolescence in Iowa. It's hard to imagine a more classically American story than the history of Read's family. His father, Orlan Bertrand Read, was born in 1871 on a farm near Topeka, Kansas, son of a family that could be traced back to Revolutionary days. The earliest Read that Allen Walker Read knows of was Elijah Read, a ferryman on the Delaware River in the eighteenth century. Read now owns the last surviving evidence of Elijah Read: the caulking iron that Elijah used to repair his boats, which has been handed down through the generations. The Read family gradually moved west with the frontier, as farmers. Each generation went a little farther: to Ohio, to Indiana, and then to Kansas.

On his mother's side Read can claim Southern blood: she was born on a farm near Macomb, Illinois, of a family from Kentucky and originally from South Carolina. In fact, Read's family experienced that bitterest of American legacies: his maternal grandfather, at the age of sixteen, fought for the South in the Civil War, and his paternal grandfather fought for the North. They never knew each other, and forty years later their children married.



Read's parents were both the first in their families to attend college. They met at Hillsdale College, in Michigan, and married in 1905, after they had earned their B.A. degrees. Orlan Read became a professor of science, moved the family to Iowa (to Pella and then to Cedar Falls), and established a new family tradition: education and teaching. Both Allen and Mary Jo were raised with the assumption that they would go to college and start teaching careers, and both obliged with impressive credentials. Read earned a B.A. from Iowa State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Iowa), where his father was then teaching; an M.A. from the University of Iowa; and a Bachelor of Letters from Oxford University, on a Rhodes Scholarship. His sister went on, after Iowa State Teachers College and the University of Chicago, to earn a Ph.D. in geography from the University of Wisconsin.

"The family had a lot of intellectual curiosity," Read says now with some understatement. It was, in fact, an unusually well-educated family for that time and place, and they lived an inquiring life. The family took several lengthy summer driving trips together, one east in 1923, and one west in 1928. "And along the way," Read says, "my father, whose knowledge was simply encyclopedic, would regale us with the history and relevance of what we were seeing."

Read goes on, "In those days, in the small colleges, a teacher of science, as my father was, taught *all* the sciences —biology, geology, chemistry—and as it turned out it was a very helpful background for me to have, because a lexicographer should have as wide a knowledge as possible." But the family fixation on teaching could be a burden as well: though Read toyed with the idea of becoming a writer—"a travel writer, going all over the world writing my impressions"—in the end education seemed the only reasonable occupation.

It's hardly surprising that, with such a background, Read went on to marry a woman who was well educated and career-minded; the surprise is that he didn't do so until he was forty-seven. He first met Charlotte Schuchardt (another Midwesterner, born in Belleville,

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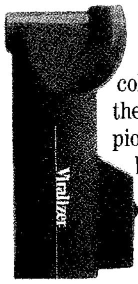

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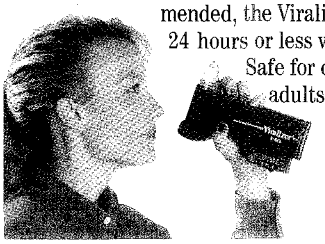

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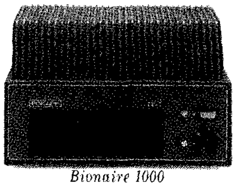
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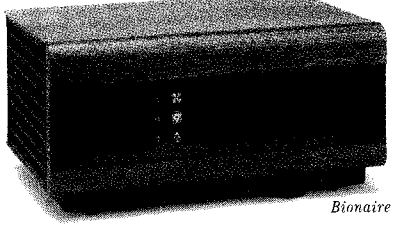
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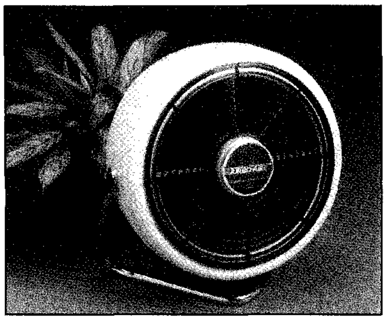
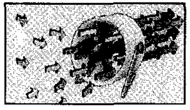
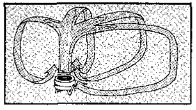



Turbo-Aire's jetstream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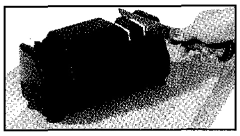

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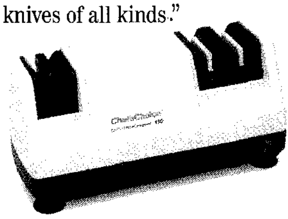

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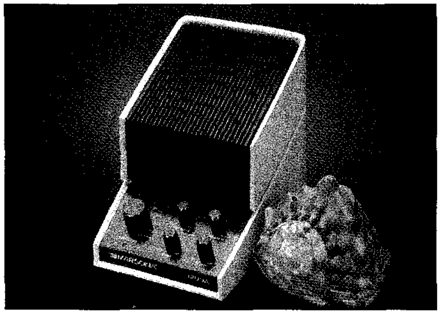

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Illinois) in 1939, in Chicago, where she was working at the Institute of General Semantics. (She is now the emeritus director of the institute, which moved to Connecticut in 1946.) She and Read would often meet at conferences and seminars, and when the institute moved east he sometimes went up to Connecticut to see her. But it wasn't until fourteen years after they met that, as he puts it, "eventually, we decided it would be a good idea to be married."

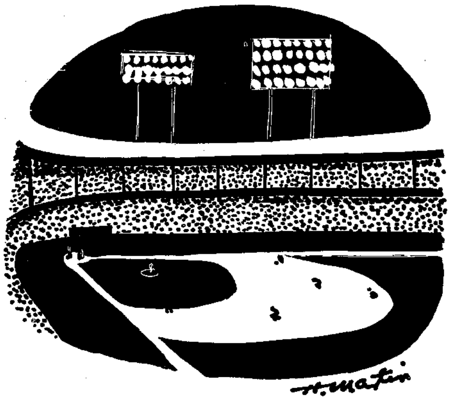
Read gives several explanations for his long bachelorhood. "Partly, it was because I wanted to be able to support a family when I got married. And, in fact, I got tenure the same year I married. That might seem to some people to be carrying caution a bit too far." But the more powerful reasons seem to be personal. He was, he admits, a little emotionally immature. Living in a dormitory at the University of Chicago while working on the D.A.E., and, later, in what he calls a "one-room occupancy" on West Twelfth Street, he was absorbed in his studies and "somewhat tied to my mother's apron strings—I just didn't feel quite free to marry until I was in middle age." Although he and his wife would have liked to have children, they got a late start and, Read says, "it just wasn't to be."

Even today, Read seems not entirely at ease talking about matters of emotion and sentiment. He is more comfortable putting his own life and background into a context, and thereby gaining some distance from them: he is happy talking about his family in terms of the westward movement and American history, and looking back at his career in terms of the sweeping changes American English has undergone in this century. And, as it happens, the two are not unconnected.

Read first became aware of American English as a distinct phenomenon when he was in his senior year at Iowa State Teachers College. No courses in linguistics or language theory were offered, but he began reading H. L. Mencken. "Young people of 1925 and '26 were all interested in Mencken," Read says. "He was the great dissenter, and we all loved him. When his *American Mercury* came out, we hung avidly on every issue. His main book at that time was 'The American Language,' so I delved into that. And I think that if any single influence got me started it was Mencken's 'American Language.' " Indeed, Read owed the idea for the subject of his master's thesis—the place-names of Iowa—to Mencken's discussion of place-names in "The American Language."

In the twenties, "The American Language" was in the process of shaking up the linguistic establishment by asserting that American English was a legitimate language that had a right to the respect and the study of its native speakers. At the time, this was a truly revolutionary idea. " 'The American Language,' as it was first published, in 1919"—it was subsequently extensively revised, although its basic philosophy remained the same—"was a proclamation of American linguistic independence, and we owe Mencken a great deal for his championing of American English," Read says. "The first edition was strongly polemical—he was putting forth this notion in a confrontation with American culture. And he won out. When I began studying in high school, in 1919, why, the teachers of speech just had contempt for American English, and that was true of speech departments all over the country. They felt that the true pronunciation of the English language was that found in England, so they tried to model their speech on British speech—which, of course, was ridiculous. You just aren't at home in your own social environment if you use a foreign accent. Mencken pointed out how ridiculous that was—that we inherit the English language from our own sources, and American English has every right to be treated as standing on its own feet, just as much as the English spoken in England. And I think Americans have come to realize that."

Read's disciple-mentor relationship with Mencken changed to one of outward equality when Read was still relatively young. When Mencken's fourth edition of "The American Language" appeared, in 1936, Read's name was prominently mentioned throughout. (In the current edition, which was edited by Raven McDavid, Jr., in the nineteen-sixties, the entry after Read's name in the index is longer than any other entry—even that for Noah Webster, the father of American dictionaries.) In 1948, in a piece for *The New Yorker* about Read's discovery of the history of "Podunk," Mencken wrote, "Allen Walker Read . . . probably knows more about early Americanisms than anyone else on earth."



Despite Mencken's open admiration, however, Read never quite felt like a true colleague. "I actually did some of my work with the view in mind: how much Mencken will enjoy this," he says. "So he was an inspiration to me even as I was doing my research. I did it so that Mencken would have the opportunity to enjoy it. He was based down at Baltimore, but every once in a while he would make a trip to New York City, and we had lunch together a number of times. I must confess that I was never at ease. I looked up to him so much that I was tongue-tied and inhibited, so I'm not quite sure what he thought of me. I just couldn't be myself when I was in the presence of a man that I idolized as much as I did him."

Read and Mencken shared a love of "backwoods" English. "You'll see archaisms there, and the early stages of the language, still in existence in the rural areas of the United States," Read says. This democratic approach to American English led Read to study some of the less well-lit corners of the language, such as slang, taboos and euphemisms, pig Latin, doubletalk, adult baby talk, and graffiti. For Read, not only is anything that is spoken inherently instructive about the state of the language but it's also instructive about the way Americans have lived and thought. "Working on the D.A.E. made me realize how much knowing the history of the American vocabulary was a way of getting at American history—it gave you insights you couldn't get in any other way," Read says.

One of the clearest examples of that philosophy at work was the story of Lightnin' Ellis and "blizzard"—the subject of Read's very first research project, completed when he was twenty years old. When Read, fresh from the master's program at the University of Iowa, first looked into "blizzard," all that was really understood about the history of the word was that it had once meant, variously, a "sharp blow" or a "volley"—as in a "blizzard of shot" from a gun—but that at a certain, unknown moment the word had acquired its now common and almost exclusive meaning: a wild, windy snowstorm. On the heels of rumors that "blizzard" as we know it today originated in the little town of Estherville, Iowa, in the northwest corner of the state, Read and a college friend hitchhiked up to investigate the Estherville newspapers from the eighteen-seventies. ("This was before the time of microfilm," Read explains.) Read found not only newspapers but Estherville residents who had lived in the town in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and who remembered the man who was the reputed coiner of the new meaning of "blizzard": Lightnin' Ellis, so nicknamed because he was known as the slowest man in the community. "He was given to odd expressions, and making this figure of speech for blizzard was one of them," Read says. He traced Lightnin's new meaning of "blizzard" to the spring of 1870, and found that within ten years of that date the meaning had spread widely in the Midwest.

Read's article on "blizzard," published in *American Speech* in February of 1928, painted a picture of pioneer life in nineteenth-century Iowa, a picture of isolation and just enough rowdy frontier spirit to make the coining of unnecessary words (with "snowstorm," who really needed "blizzard"?) a likelihood. Estherville had survived a Sioux uprising and long, hard winters; its newspaper provided badly needed entertainment for its citizens, and the newspaper office itself was the gathering place of the town, where Lightnin' Ellis and others came to warm their hands at the stove and banter with the paper's editor. That refuge became the birthplace of the new "blizzard," and Read was not satisfied until he had found the flesh and blood of its history.

The story of "blizzard" set the pattern for later etymologies: of "Podunk," "Dixie," the rebel yell, not to mention "O.K."—all of which are, in Read's philosophy, not just colorful words but clues to a national state of

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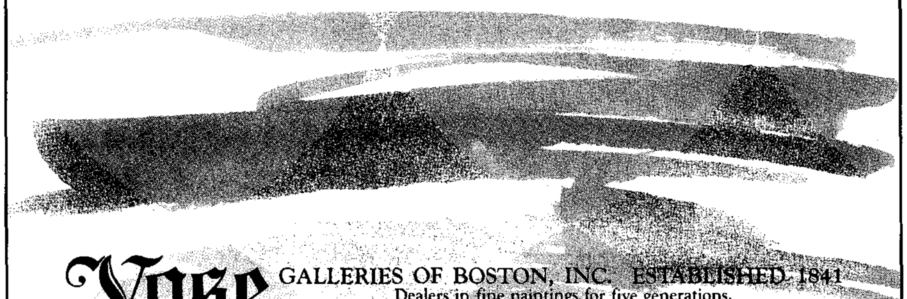

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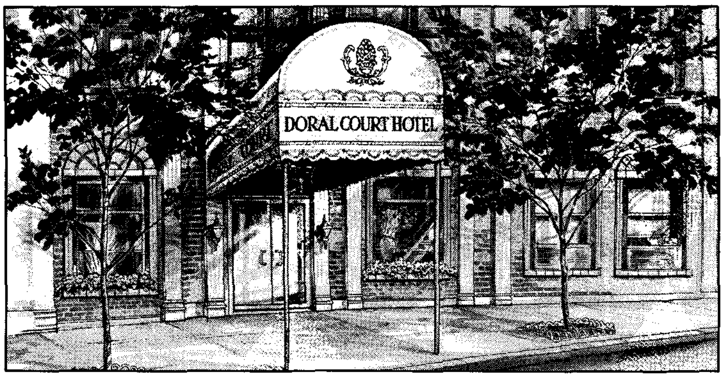

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mind, or at least to regional self-images. So, too, are place-names; one of his better-known articles traces all the names that natives of Connecticut have ever called themselves, including Connecticotians, Connecticutensians, and Connecticuties, the last referring to pretty girls of Connecticut. He has also documented the various names given to the dominant range of Western mountains: it was called first Stony, then Shining, and then Enchanted before finally becoming the Rocky Mountains. Another Read article suggests that the repetition of certain town names—Providence, Lexington, Springfield—across the new territories of the expanding United States served to pull the fledgling country together (instead of merely showing, as some have suggested, a paucity of imagination).

It is perhaps not coincidental that Mencken and then Read were developing these ideas in a time of American expansion. The First World War helped to do away with the vestiges of America's colonial status, and by Read's heyday, after the Second World War, this country's place among others had changed from upstart to world power. And yet in many ways even today we don't, as a nation, feel quite confident about our language—we suffer, perhaps, from a sort of linguistic impostor syndrome. An important part of Read's work has been to explore this insecurity: in his extensive comparative studies of American and British English he has challenged what he calls linguistic colonialism—the lingering feeling of Americans that our use of language doesn't measure up to that of the mother country.

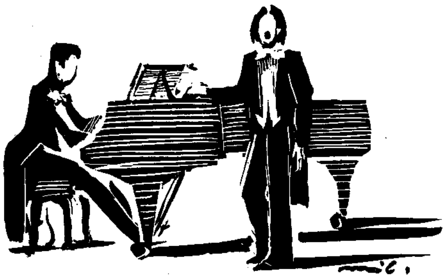
The peculiarities of American English, engrossing as they are, do not form the sum total of Read's work. He has made substantial contributions to the study of lexicography (researching and writing dictionaries), semantics (the exploration of the meaning of words—a pursuit that can sometimes drift into the existential), and English usage and grammar. One of his proudest achievements is one of the most recent: in January of 1988, he was awarded a Doctorate of Letters from Oxford University, in recognition of his accumulated body of work in the English language.

Read's research, in fact, has ranged over such a wide field that he has trouble describing his job in a few words. In a list of his publications that he put together in 1965, he attempted to coin a definition of himself: "[This] list has been revised to its present form partly as an exercise in self-examination," he wrote. "What is the overall pattern of my scholarly interests? . . . I regard myself as a student of human culture, using language as the chief material of my research. It is hard to find a name for this broad field—possibly 'socio-linguistics,' or possibly, on the basis of the materials that I love to draw upon, the interdisciplinary area of 'American studies.' "

It is curious that a man whose lifework has been the study of the precise meanings of words—and also of the names that people call themselves—should find himself unable to describe his own career. When I first met Read, I asked him what he calls himself, and he began with a negative, explaining that "I shy away from the word 'linguist,' " because that "so often means a person who speaks many languages, like a polyglot, and I'm anything but a polyglot." He finally concluded, "When I'm asked to describe myself, I just have to say 'professor of English.' " Yet Read's perplexity is understandable. Somehow, his work does come to a whole, but if that sum total is difficult to characterize, it is probably because the object of his study, the language itself, is equally layered and equally elusive.

READ'S basic philosophy of language is his philosophy of life as well: in brief, nothing is absolute, nothing is forever, or even completely knowable at any instant in time. Our response to this, he feels, ought to be to take things as they are, and not to strain for perfection—which is, in any case, impossible to achieve. In popular terms, what will be, will be. Or, in the doctrine of the nineteenth-century English grammarian Robert G. Latham, quoted often by Read, whatever is, is right.

"Certainty is an illusion," Read said to me at our first meeting. "You have to get used to the idea that things are probable or improbable. If only we could attain a feeling of happiness when we recognize that we're living in a probabilistic world, we'd be so much better off." In his view, people are, in fact, becoming a little more comfortable with this attitude. "People were far more likely to hold to certitudes and eternal verities and that sort of thing back in the last century," he said. "I think the more they understand anthropology and biology and zoology and, especially, geology—the history of the physical world—the more they realize that everything changes, and nothing is permanent."



This way of viewing the world, when it is applied to language, leads to some interesting ideas. It has produced in Read a strong dislike for what he calls "absolutisms," such as "perfect," "correct," "certain," "pure," "total," "true," "final," "ultimate." But the view that nothing is certain goes deeper; it forms a part of every inquiry that Read has pursued. Take the study of place-names. What becomes clear after hearing Read's histories is how arbitrary and uncertain the naming process often seems to have been. That the Rockies are called the Rockies is now written in stone, but how subtly different they—and North America itself—would seem if the range had been named the Northern Andes, as it was called in 1804.

On a smaller scale, Read believes that a word's meaning subtly alters every time it is used—a process he calls semantic fluidity. "Meanings keep changing day by day," he says. "Even when we ourselves use a word a second time, it's not exactly the same as the time before." Such ready changes can understandably cause problems in communication, and Read's term for these problems is semantic blockage. "Some words lose their efficacy, their effectiveness," he says. "During this last Presidential campaign, for example—why, one hardly dares call oneself a liberal anymore. Through all my life, I've been proud to be a liberal, but if liberals are such dreadful people as our new President indicates I don't want to call myself one anymore. That's a verbal problem, a semantic blockage. When you come upon a word that has suffered a semantic blockage, you find that your subject has veered off from what you wanted to say, just because you've used a word that people take in a different way. I've often wondered what to do about semantic blockages. I think we should just face it that we have to give up the word for a while, and perhaps the word will be rehabilitated."

Read has been following the progress of various semantic blockages for decades and has among his piles of papers lists of elusive terms from years past. In fact, at one time Read hoped to collect his semantic blockages into "A Semantic Guide to Current English." In a proposal for the project in 1943 he wrote, "This reference work will give concrete and detailed information on the present-day status of a large number of mischievous and trouble-making words; and it should be a source-work used in discussions of current semantic problems."

"I do wish I could have gone ahead with my semantic guide," Read says now, a touch wistfully. "I still have about forty thousand quotations collected, so my work is still under way, even at my age." He laughs. "My goals have sometimes been larger than what I could accomplish." This is a problem that comes up frequently: there are papers that Read never quite finished, speeches he meant to prepare for publication but didn't. It is, perhaps, a natural side effect of pursuing a path of study that has an inherent fluidity. "One's interests just keep expanding," he says.

All this semantic vacillation is a dilemma for dictionary-makers, who have a particularly intimate relationship with the problem of absolutes. There is simply no way that a dictionary can convey every shade of meaning; it cannot be absolute (though most of its readers expect it to be). "The ideal dictionary would have a definition for every one of its citations," Read wrote in one paper; but that is obviously impossible, for reasons of space. The best we can do when it comes to meaning, in dictionaries as in speech, is to hope to be in the same ballpark, according to Read. "We can never hope to do more than approximate the passage of a message from one person to another," he says. "The notion that we have expressed things in such a way that we've done it once and for all is just a delusion some people cultivate."

As a dictionary-maker, Read has had to refine his philosophy—based on the impossibility of absolutes—to

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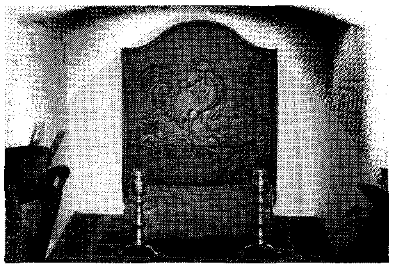

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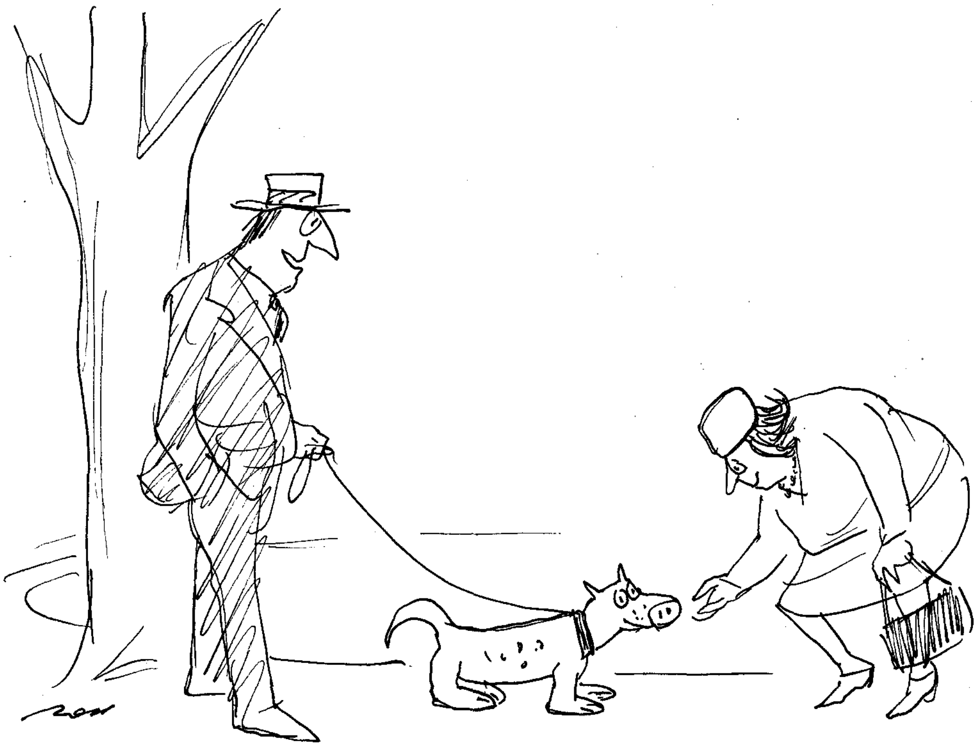

"They are not yet recognized by the American Kennel Club."

somehow accommodate the need for concise definitions of words. What do you do when a dictionary promises what it can't deliver—the truth, the one and only truth? In Read's case, you explain this failure right up front, in a foreword, as he did in his essay "Perspective on the English Language," which appears in the Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of the English Language. Buried in the following passage from that foreword is an allegory that, once deciphered, is one of the most direct statements of Read's reasoning:

> The problems of semantics are well illustrated in a story told by the psychologist Hadley Cantril. Three baseball umpires were discussing how they made their decisions. The first one said, "Some's balls and some's strikes and I calls 'em as they is." The second umpire said, "Some's balls and some's strikes and I calls 'em as I sees 'em." Then the third umpire said, "Some's balls and some's strikes but they ain't nothin' till I calls 'em." The implications of these three points of view are, I believe, deep. The first umpire, who "calls 'em as they is," has a dogmatic, absolutistic, rigid attitude. The second one, who says, "I calls 'em as I sees 'em," has a very different world outlook: he realizes that his own nervous responses are involved in his decision. The third umpire has taken a more extreme position. When he says, "they ain't nothin' till I calls 'em," he has become aware that he himself imposes a pattern on the world of change and flux. The student of semantics must grapple with such profound considerations of man's relations to the world he lives in.

Which kind of umpire is Read? "The middle one," he says with no hesitation. He adds, "I keep worrying about that third. But I just can't quite agree with that. I do think there is something out there that we do our best to assimilate and judge. I toy with the idea of the third outlook, and wonder if it's possible, but I really don't think so." Even after sixty years in the business, Read still grapples with the question raised by that third umpire: Does the lexicographer have more power than he knows? Does he create the language, in a way, by the very act of writing definitions for a dictionary? Should he? Who's the expert, anyway—the pitcher (the native speakers of the language) or the umpire (the linguists and lexicographers who describe it)?

ONE could assume, given the number of dictionaries and language reference books currently on sale, that Americans are concerned about the way they use the language. Lined up in profusion are books with titles like "Common Mistakes in English," "The Painless Path to Proper English Usage," "Watch Your Language," and "Questions You Always Wanted to Ask About English"—not to mention the four hardcover volumes of William Safire's "On Language" column from the *Times*.

Such a fascination with usage seems understandable—and harmless. After all, on the grandest scale language is a key element in civilization; and, on a lesser scale, our use of language affects how we're thought of by others. But in fact that popular, benign concern with correct usage masks a debate that Allen Walker Read has, of necessity, figured in rather compellingly, and one that strikes directly at his beliefs in the impossibility of absolutes and the inevitability of change and uncertainty. The best way to understand that debate is to start at the beginning: the first dictionary. Read is, as it happens, good friends with the first dictionary, because his dissertation at Oxford, in the early thirties, was on the history of dictionaries. He's also the author of the Encyclopædia Britannica's entry on dictionaries.

The first English dictionary was a relatively recent phenomenon, published in 1604. This dictionary and the many that followed valued continuity of language highly, and took as their goal not only the recording of definitions and spelling (the latter varied wildly until around 1650) but, in the words of one lexicographer in 1707, "the fixing of the English language." The first lexicographer to have any measure of success at that was Samuel Johnson, actually not a professional lexicographer at all but a writer, editor, skeptic, wit, and general man of letters—qualities that were to influence his enormously popular Dictionary. His work set such a standard that people developed the habit of saying, "Look it up in Johnson," much as Americans would later say, "Look it up in Webster." Johnson announced, "The chief intent [of the Dictionary] is to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of our English idiom." In writing the Dictionary, however, he came to recognize that that goal was often obscured by the capriciousness of the very creature he was trying to educate. "Language is the work of man, of a being from whom permanence and stability cannot be derived," Johnson finally decided. He settled for trying to control at least "the lust for innovation." Carl Sandburg, several hundred years later, took a more positive approach to the problem when he said, “The English language didn’t get where it is by being pure.”

Although much changed between Johnson’s time and Sandburg’s, purity is still at the heart of the controversy over dictionaries and modern language. If, as Johnson found, it is impossible for dictionaries to “preserve the purity” of the language, what *is* a dictionary’s role? To Read, the answer is simple. “The lexicographer’s responsibility is to record what is found as being in existence in the language, in the past and in the present,” he says. “Also part of the record is that the lexicographer has to give the status of a word—whether the élite alone are using it, or whether those who are less than élite are using it, too. Purity is not an ideal, really. There’s never been a time when the English language was pure.”

This answer makes some people unhappy, for while the attitude of most modern lexicographers toward dictionaries matches Read’s, the popular attitude toward dictionaries has changed little since Johnson’s day. Most of us want, and expect, a dictionary to be not just a describer but an arbiter, a guide, a source of right-and-wrong, of final answers. We want something that says “ain’t” is wrong, that there’s only one way to spell “rock and roll” or to pronounce “often,” that “impact” should be used only as a noun, not as a verb. We want what Read feels does not exist: the ultimate definition, an inarguable authority.

This is an attitude that Read feels is peculiarly American. “The whole notion of purity is a kind of outgrowth of the puritanical streak in American culture,” he says. We can also blame our long-standing cultural insecurity. In his dictionary essay in the Encyclopædia Britannica, he explained, “In colonial times Americans felt themselves to be far from the centre of civilization and were willing to accept a book standard in order to learn what they thought prevailed in England. . . . Rather than observe the language around them, as Englishmen commonly do, Americans give up their autonomy and fly to a dictionary to settle questions on language.”

To understand the full scope of the debate—to see the various armies lined up—it is necessary to understand a few important points in the history of linguistics. Linguistics is a relatively new field; although some form of it existed in ancient times, it did not acquire the status of a scientific, systematic discipline until the nineteenth century. What gradually emerged, as language was studied more intensively, was several basic ideas: that languages necessarily change, and that a linguist’s role is to describe language and its changes as best he can, and as a scientist—that is, without judging. Hence the term “descriptive linguistics,” which has become the mainstream of the field.

This attitude toward correctness is now the accepted one in linguistics, despite the continued teaching of a prescriptive grammar in many schools—a grammar based on the theory that one must set “correct” standards of language, to which all speakers should conform. Edgar Sturtevant wrote in a standard linguistics text of 1947, “Perhaps the most serious fault of many school grammars is the attempt to brand certain speech forms as incorrect. Since all language is arbitrary, whatever speech is current in the community is necessarily correct; aside from lapses, only a foreigner can speak incorrectly. When English teachers condemn *it’s me*, they are trying to foist Latin grammar upon the language, and when they condemn *ain’t*, they are promoting a certain class dialect.”

Read’s way of dealing with the idea of correctness is to try to avoid the word altogether. “I think it is very unwise to use the word ‘correct’ as frequently as it is used,” he says. “A word like ‘appropriate’ is much better. I have continually had to battle the word ‘correct,’ particularly in my course Problems in English Usage, which I taught for over twenty years at Columbia.”

It’s easy to see how this theory could go against the grain—in fact, even seem to defy logic. Isn’t there, after all, a kind of English that seems “right,” the kind that you hear newscasters use, or that you read in an eloquent book or essay—an English that follows standard rules of grammar, in which the verb agrees with the subject and “that” and “which” are used according to the rule of restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses? Read acknowledges that there is an English like that, but he considers it just one of many possible dialects, and calls it “standard” or “educated”

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or "literary"—not "correct." He says, "It's the if-then principle, you see. If you want to appear a successful person, then this is the way you should talk. Taste enters into language choices at practically all points. For instance, my personal dialect is a kind of schoolmaster English, and I certainly don't expect others necessarily to follow what I do. If they want to, that should be their choice; if they want me as their model, they're welcome to it, but I don't consider myself a model. I'm just a little too formal in my usual speech; I don't want other people to sound as I do."

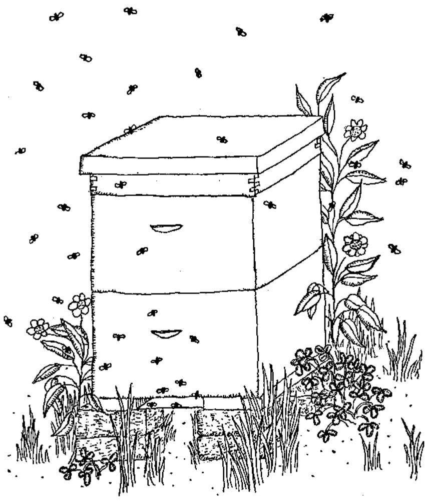
This laissez-faire, or "libertarian," attitude (that is Read's term) toward language and correctness is infuriating to a whole crowd of thinkers whose greatest concern is that American English is growing less and less correct—that it is in danger of degenerating into corrupt and unintelligible dialects. A large contingent feels that the descriptive linguists have abrogated their responsibilities to the language. To this uncompromising group Read became the equivalent of a man waving a red flag when, in 1961, he gave a speech to the Linguistic Circle of Columbia University entitled "Can Native Speakers of a Language Make Mistakes?" (The speech gained wider currency when he submitted it in abstract form to the Linguistic Society of America in 1964.) His answer to the question was a definite "No," and it resounded among language critics as the most bald-faced and extreme example of the nuttiness of linguists.

Jacques Barzun—scholar, teacher, editor, critic, professor of history at Columbia from 1927 to 1975, and since then professor emeritus—wrote in an introductory essay to one of his books on language, "A Word or Two Before You Go . . .": "Modern grammarians have thundered against rules and fought the idea of correctness. Everybody, they said, has 'a right to his or her own ways of speech,' unspoiled by criticism; it is snobbish and humiliating to correct. Language lives by alteration —there is no better or worse. . . . This wisdom was admirably summed up in 1964 by a distinguished linguist, Mr. Allen Walker Read, in the question: 'Can a Native Speaker Make Mistakes?' The answer *No* amounted to a law. It disposed at a stroke of all the 'Deans of Writing' and all the teachers from kindergarten up. But Mr. Read was not more rash or cynical than his fellow linguists; he was only more honest and forthright."

To Barzun, this "wisdom" of Read's is a dangerous notion. "For the language that prevails now," he went on, "among people who are serious, schooled, and carrying on the world's work is . . . as a whole more bad than good, inherently clumsy and ponderous: words misunderstood and misapplied, idioms distorted, prepositions used at random, jargon and imagery blanketing thought, novelties multiplying without need, grammar and syntax defied to no purpose."

These were strong words about the language we live with from day to day, and there were stronger ones to follow. We are in a period of "linguistic decadence," Barzun wrote. "The rapid deterioration of language is a general phenomenon which is denounced throughout Western Europe." And, again, "During the last hundred years, nearly every intellectual force has worked, in all innocence, against language."

Actually, finding decline in the language is a time-honored enterprise. Even in epochs that today seem like Edens of purity and erudition, there was a healthy contingent of worriers—including some writers who are now considered among the greatest users of the language. Daniel Defoe, writing in 1697 to propose an academy of language (a popular notion in that era, because the French had established the Académie Française, which produced a dictionary in 1694), suggested that "the Work of this [proposed academy] shou'd be to encourage Polite Learning, to polish and refine the *English* Tongue, and advance the so much neglected Faculty of Correct Language, to establish Purity and Propriety of Stile, and to purge it from all the Irregular Additions that Ignorance and Affectation have introduc'd; and all those Innovations in Speech, if I may call them such, which some Dogmatic Writers have the Confidence to foster upon their Native Language, as if their Authority were sufficient to make their own Fancy legitimate." (But who better, Read would argue almost three centuries later, to foster innovations upon the language than the users themselves?)



Jonathan Swift joined the chorus of dismay about the state of English in 1712 with his own proposal to create an academy, with the goal of "*ascertaining* and *fixing* our Language for ever." He argued that "our Language is extremely imperfect; that its daily Improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily Corruptions; that the Pretenders to polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied Abuses and Absurdities; and, that in many Instances, it offends against every Part of Grammar."

In the eighteenth century, the culprits were the Dogmatic Writers, the Pretenders of Improvement; in the twentieth century, according to Barzun and others, they are the linguists. Wilson Follett, another champion of the language (his "Modern American Usage" was completed by Barzun after Follett's death, in 1963), was equally disturbed by Read's "Can Native Speakers of the Language Make Mistakes?" In his introduction to "Modern American Usage," entitled "On Usage, Purism, and Pedantry," Follett took on Read's theory: "When the *New Yorker* reprints as an amusing tidbit *A symposium sponsored by the IEEE computer group will present a dearth of material on technologies, logic and memory implementations . . .* , it is because most of those who use *dearth* continue to believe that it means scarcity and not, as the writer thought, abundance. That writer was undoubtedly a native speaker, yet he seems to have made what used to be called a mistake. Very likely his mind was momentarily distracted from the word *wealth*, and he wrote *dearth*. Such slips of the mind, tongue, or pen occur by the million every day without any effect but a smile or a slight embarrassment. The accepted meaning of the word that is misused remains untouched; and hence also the idea of *accepted:* it must signify what in freer days people dared to call *correct*.”

Read dismisses this rather redoubtable argument as a quibble. “Well, it may seem that I am just being picky about terminology,” he says when faced with Follett’s logic. “I do think that blunders occur, so that I would use the word ‘blunder’ for some of the things that he points out. And is there a distinction between a blunder and a mistake? You see, that’s a very tricky distinction.” It is perhaps the same distinction that Edgar Sturtevant was trying to make with the word “lapse” when he specified that “aside from lapses, only a foreigner can speak incorrectly.”

“The reason I’m so strongly against the use of the word ‘mistake’ is that it has had wide currency among teachers of English—they just say in an offhand way, ‘Oh, that’s a mistake,’ without examining it and seeing that it has a background that explains it, and that it may be a perfectly fine historical form,” Read says. “For instance, most teachers of English would say that the double negative is a mistake. But if you look at the history of the double negative, it was accepted as the normal thing in the Old English stage of the language. And the double negative didn’t get expunged from the language till around the sixteenth century, when the logicians led the way, and people who thought we must be more logical in our use of language followed. So the use of the double negative is not a mistake; it is a holdover from an earlier stage of the language that may be perfectly normal to people talking on the colloquial level.”

While Read’s logic is frustrating to those who fear for the future of the language, Read himself is equally frustrated by what he sees as a threat to all that is vibrant and distinctive in it. “The attempt to homogenize American English is something I’m so much against,” he says. “People should be individual in their use of language, it seems to me. So that there’s individual variation, based upon regional variation; that’s all to the good. It makes the English language richer. It makes personal life richer. The attempt to stamp out variation—oh, is a dreadful thing, in my opinion.”

When he talks about the opposing arguments, it becomes evident that Read was for thirty years a schoolmaster. A certain scolding tone creeps into his voice as he murmurs that Follett et al. ought to know these things, really; that they’re simply deluding themselves; that he himself tries to get rid of as many delusions as he can in order to be a sound linguistic scientist. His impatience seems to arise not from a feeling of being threatened by the polemics against his view but, rather, from an irritation that these people just *won’t listen to reason*, they just *won’t look at the scientific evidence.*

Around the time that Read’s speech on whether native speakers could make mistakes was shocking the protectors of the language, another target was emerging: Webster’s Third International Dictionary. That tome raised, in the starkest form yet, all the issues of purity, change, degeneracy, and élitism at once. It also raised again the spectre of Read’s three umpires and the enduring questions they embody: What is a dictionary for, and whose authority does it represent?

ALTHOUGH there are many English and American dictionaries, only a few are considered comprehensive and authoritative enough to serve as the basic texts for copy editors, teachers, and scholars. The O.E.D. is one, but it is unwieldy for frequent use. There is also the Random House unabridged and the Funk & Wagnalls, but, beginning in 1934, Webster’s New International, Second Edition, was a general favorite among those whose business compelled them to rely often on a dictionary. Some editors still speak warmly of it today, though it was superseded by the Third Edition in 1961.

That edition, called the Third International, was the product of a three-and-a-half-million-dollar investment and what its publisher, the G. & C. Merriam Company, cryptically called “757 editor-years.” It was touted by Merriam’s publicity department as an accurate mirror of the language—so up-to-date, in fact, that it quoted the likes of Ethel Merman and Mickey Spillane. It was also broad-minded enough to describe “ain’t” as “used orally in most parts of the U.S. by many cultivated speakers.” The chief effect of this advance publicity, it turned out, was to point a finger directly at the most controversial aspects of the new dictionary.

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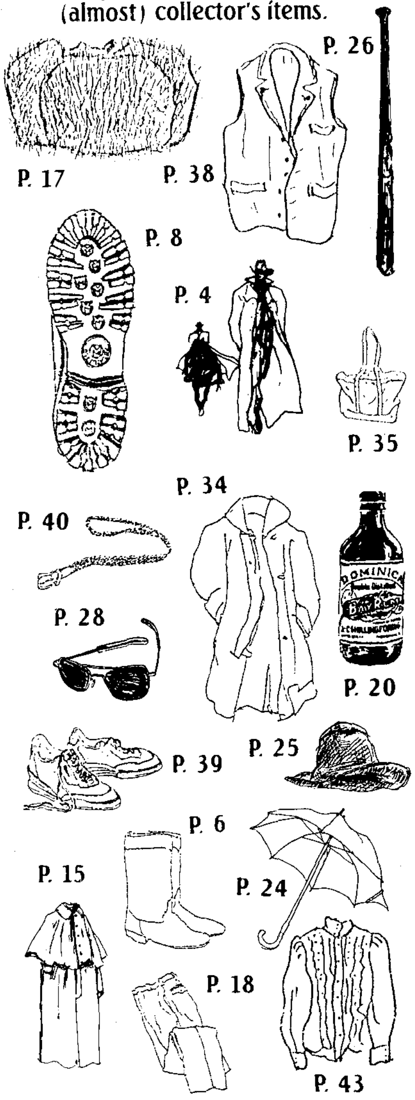

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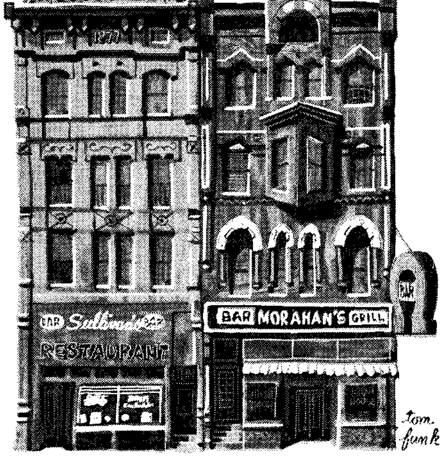
such rage. The *Times* editorialized, "Webster's has, it is apparent, surrendered to the permissive school that has been busily extending its beachhead on English instruction in the schools. . . . The publication of a say-as-you-go dictionary can only accelerate the deterioration" of the language. *The New Republic* wrote that it was through the work of such dictionaries that "the language is allowed to degenerate." Wilson Follett, in a long piece in *The Atlantic Monthly*, called the Third Edition "a very great calamity . . . a dismaying assortment of the questionable, the perverse, the unworthy, and the downright outrageous . . . a scandal and a disaster."

Within a few months of the dictionary's publication, the president of the American Heritage Publishing Company, a competitor, announced that he was bidding for control of the G. & C. Merriam Company, because the company was "badly in need of guidance." So much was written about this dictionary that the next year a book was published, "Dictionaries and That Dictionary," that traced and reprinted the various commentaries.

To Read, the Third International merely did what every modern, responsible lexicographer sees as his duty: it described the language as it was currently being spoken. In the eyes of the Third International, all speakers were, in a basic way, equal: a chance-recorded sentence by President Eisenhower and a phrase written by an unnamed journalist in the *Times* were considered to be as worthwhile proofs of usage as a line from Shakespeare or Alexander Pope. The Third adhered to the tenets of the science of linguistics, a science whose acceptance, in the words of the dictionary's editor-in-chief, Philip B. Gove, "is hardly any longer a matter of opinion" but, rather, "a matter of demonstrable fact." In practice, this meant accepting "like" as a conjunction, treating "imply" as an accepted synonym for "infer," accepting without a struggle the word "finalize," and listing "confab" and "yak" as words in good standing. Slang, colorful but theretofore eschewed as an illegitimate cousin, was accepted.

Read's was not the only voice in favor of the new dictionary's viewpoint. *Editor & Publisher* called the controversy "a flurry of nitwitted commentary"; *Newsweek* admitted (albeit a little grudgingly) that the dictionary was only following accepted linguistic thought. *The Atlantic* gave equal time to the dictionary's defenders by printing a full-length rebuttal to its Follett piece, an article titled "But What's a Dictionary For?" written by Bergen Evans, a professor of English at Northwestern University and the author, with his sister Cornelia Evans, of "A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage." Evans pointed out, "Every publication in America today includes pages that would appear, to the purist of forty years ago, unbuttoned gibberish. Not that they are; they simply show that you can't hold the language of one generation up as a model for the next. It's not that you mustn't. You *can't*."

Read entered the Webster's Third fracas directly when he was asked to contribute a recommendation of the dictionary to the magazine *Consumer Reports*. He provided a piece that summarized his basic beliefs about the inherent mutability of language, asserting that "the notion that a language can be captured and fixed in a static form" is only a dream. One of the few faults he found with the dictionary was what he saw as a weakness in labelling; that is, the description of a word's "standing" in the language as "slang," "substand," or "nonstand." This is not the contradiction in Read's thinking that it might seem: good labelling insists not that a word is right or wrong but simply that it is more appropriate for colloquial situations or for formal ones. Such labelling, Read writes, is "an objective observation about the usual nature of the contexts in which a word appears and is not a directive to the user." The Third International's weakness in labelling, however, was not disruptive enough to keep Read from concluding that the dictionary was "a worthy exemplar of the great Websterian tradition."



The letters to the editor in response to Read's article arrived in such volume that *Consumer Reports* ran a second piece, a few months later, just to report on them. Indignation levels ran high, with most letter writers insisting that a dictionary's role is to guide, to put forth standards of language. With this one article, Read came in for the most scathing and most personal criticism of his career: he was variously called "a standardless sociologist of language," a "wrong-side-up pedant," a "dogmatist of linguistic democracy."

Read felt compelled to contribute a few more words to the controversy. "The great danger in the use of dictionaries is that they may come to be thought of as strait jackets that prevent the swinging, free enjoyment of the mother tongue," he wrote in *Consumer Reports*, in a response to the letter writers. "The best advice is that we should be so observant of the language used around us that we will carry our own dictionary in our heads, and most of us do just that."

The fuel for the firestorm of Webster's Third criticism—beyond arguments about standards and slang and newfangled linguistic liberalism—was, of course, the looming danger of the whole language sliding down a slippery slope to what one letter writer called "debasement," to "a progressive loss of language function," the fear of Barzun and many others. But Read is as sanguine about the future of the language as he was about the threat posed by Webster's Third.

Some critics, for example, cite the proliferation of mass culture and the mass media as the instruments of corruption and decline, but Read feels that mass communication is more likely to *slow* the rate of change. "The speed of change is less than it was in the earlier stages of the language," he says. "The writing system slowed up linguistic change. And the fact that the entire nation is listening to certain programs from one end of the country to the other tends to flatten out regional variation and personal variation, too. That's just an example of natural forces at work. And I feel that natural forces do take care of these problems, for the most part. The coming of radio

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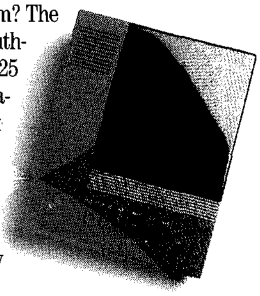

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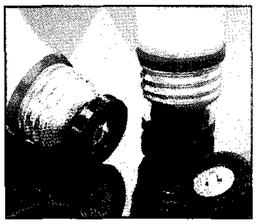

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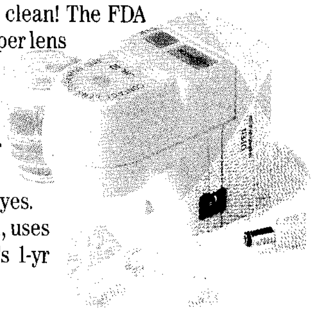

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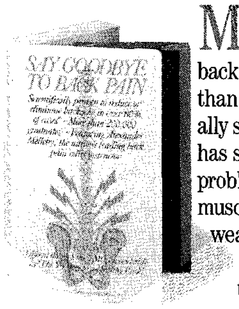

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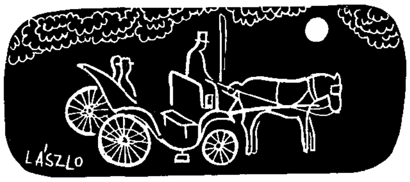
and then TV has been one of the natural forces that have been shaping the English language in recent times."

Another natural force controlling language, Read says, is the simple need for communication: what's the use of language if no one understands what you're talking about? "I usually make personal choices for the older forms of language," he says. "But there's a feeling among young people that if they can use up-to-date language they're better off. That's a problem that takes care of itself. If they find they can't be understood, and they have to say things over and over again, or choose some variant form, that is a constraint that will tend to keep the language within bounds."

We are not helpless pawns in this business, Read insists. The language is our own creation, and—with a touch of moralism—he says that our language reflects, finally, our worth, our aspirations as a culture. "Language is bound to change whether we want it to or not, but whether the change is for the better or the worse, that's a problem," he says. "It seems to me that a group of people gets the language that it deserves. If they're a cultivated people, they'll have a cultivated language. If they're an uncultivated people, they will have an uncultivated language. So I don't think people need to worry about language; I think we need to worry about our level of sophistication and sensitivity and humanity and about living a rich life."

Such reasoning can be the mark either of a cynic or of an incorrigible optimist, and Read surely would fall into the latter category. So far, he feels, any changes and refinements in the language have been in our favor. "The basis of all communication is the give-and-take of human beings, and some people engage in this give-and-take in a much more adept way, with great art," he says. "English especially had a number of great artists, from Shakespeare on down—Alexander Pope, Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Johnson, and so on. English was gradually refined by the users, the artistic users of the language. And a language becomes more successful as a means of communication when the users of it solve some of their problems. When we find that by adopting a new way of speaking and a new vocabulary, and so on, someone is very successful as a communicator, then people who come along after him have the opportunity to take advantage of what he has done. And so users of language now stand on the shoulders of the people who have been successful in their use of the language in former generations." (Even if those earlier users, like Swift and Defoe, themselves thought their language was uncultivated.)

Read made his most definitive—and most public—declaration on the state of the language in 1963, when he appeared on the TV show "Court of Reason" to defend the beleaguered English tongue. In 1965, he published his opinion as an article in the magazine *Word Study*, under the title "Is American English Deteriorating?" ("I just reread it for the first time in many years," Read told me, "and I still feel it states exactly what I believe.")



"Who has any right to dictate to free members of the English-speaking community?" Read wrote sharply, accusing the "purists" of instilling insecurity and a lack of self-confidence in the native speakers of the language. "Standards are a personal matter, and any attempt to impose them on others is fraught with great danger." And, of course, a drive to keep English from deteriorating necessarily focusses on slang and colloquial words—new words, unusual formulations—which to Read are a key to our very character. "Anyone who tries to defend 'the treasure of our tongue' should recognize that a valuable part of the treasure is the colloquial element, localisms, and slang," he wrote. "In them lies sturdy strength, and they are a constant source of enrichment."

The twenty-four years that have passed since Read published those words have loosened some of the

I IMAGINE BACK

to the year when my throat, lungs, chest
were full of breath: hay mown into a haymow,
a field, a mulberry-treed roadside. Back
to precise black roads, starred and lettered
in unnamed weeds—in an arc: brown-gray
to goldenrod yellow, long-grass green,
and gray-brown.

How could I want to keep my heart
in this ignorance forever?

I imagine back to when coffee came
to take the first taste of its own name,
seeing at last its sweet, black,
true intention. A day when the woods,
like jobo wood, lay and begged to be freed
by the carpenter bird, making to measure
their own grain—the very beginning of myth

and prayer—though not that day inventing
the carpenter bird.

And finally back to the hour that started the
world, the start of me, when all things
alike were safe, alike at mercy,
and nothing but sharp-carved, living
fathers or mothers, ancestor gods,
trees, storms, had any will
or any power.

Though today I could nearly believe—
But no, it is not now so.

—Elizabeth Macklin

• •

more stringent attitudes toward linguistic change, as they have loosened attitudes toward so many other aspects of American culture. Although Read calls the philosophy of correctness espoused by Follett and Barzun still "a very general view," and points out that "the editorial board of *The American Scholar* for the most part would be in this view . . . as well as a lot of professors of English," the more popular indicators tell a different story. Just as TV censors who in the sixties disapproved of showing Dick van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore sharing a connubial double bed on "The Dick van Dyke Show" now see nothing shocking in scenes about birth control and sadomasochism, many language mavens now seem more comfortable with the notion of accepting into the language new word meanings as well as coined words that would have seemed like atrocities a few decades ago. The newer attitude seems evident in a recent William Safire "On Language" column in the *Times*, in which he examined the widening definition of "androgynous." In explaining that "androgynous" is enjoying a vogue as a synonym for "interchangeable" (whereas it used to mean, more specifically, "endowed with the characteristics of both sexes"), Safire wrote, "*Androgynous* is exciting because it is sexy, while *interchangeable* is dull because it is mechanistic. . . . When the only available word loses its force, writers will look around for other, similar words—and will stretch their meanings or extend their metaphors to cover the old word. The new meaning, though not in the dictionary, is not incorrect; it's being tested, and may vanish as a nonce word or take root as a synonym. . . . Language, like political attraction, is a mystery, and experts and -ologists can point and comment with certitude but can never be sure which way the flow will go."

"It says, 'If you know what's good for you, get those Adirondack chairs the hell out of the Poconos.'"

• •

The reaction to the recently released Second Edition of the venerable O.E.D. is further proof of how popular attitudes have evolved. The O.E.D. includes such colloquialisms as "fast track," "nose job," "yuppification," and "bazooms" (the last based on usage by Norman Mailer and Elmore Leonard)—the very kinds of words and methods that shocked critics of Webster's Third in 1961. Not only have critics accepted such citations without a whimper, they have actually seemed charmed by the inclusion of such trendy words—the *Times* and *Newsweek*, among others, delighted in printing some of the most faddish examples.

SOME of Read's success as an etymologist may stem from his facility with sources—and from an open-mindedness that he learned from one of his first professors at the University of Iowa, Thomas A. Knott. "The important thing is getting evidence," Read says in describing Professor Knott's creed. "Don't just depend on hearsay, get dated quotations of the use of a word. Even if you just hear a word in conversation, take down the time and circumstance that you hear it—that makes a documentation that the word turned up orally at that point." The dictum made so much sense to Read that he decided to take it further than it had ever been taken before. The result was Read's first controversial work: his study of graffiti, the first scholarly compilation of graffiti as a linguistic resource.

Soon after hearing Knott's rule for linguists, it occurred to Read that no such documentation existed for "bad" words. "Some people may hold it against me for dealing with nasty material, but you don't have any moral judgment on language, you just study it as an object," he says now. "Bad words are just as valuable in showing human behavior as good words—in fact, even better in some respects. I realized that if we could only get documentation, dictionaries could be richer and fuller in treating entries for these words." When Read's family took their western trip in 1928, he began to see the scrawlings on outhouses and picnic tables and abandoned buildings as something other than defacements. "The graffiti provided documentation for these bad words," he says.

Read's copious notations on Ameri-

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can graffiti, from Arizona to Washington State, may have seemed like science to him, but sixty years ago they did not enchant potential publishers. Read had given up on publication when, in 1934, he met the late Eric Partridge, the eminent lexicographer, while studying at the British Museum. Partridge urged him to print his graffiti study privately, so that other scholars could appreciate the work, and that year Read ordered seventy-five copies from a Paris publishing house. It was received with interest by the scholarly community, and Mencken mentioned it favorably in his 1936 edition of "The American Language." (In 1977, it was publicly printed in the United States, by Maledicta Press.)

In more recent years, Read has perused New York subway walls for graffiti, and has recorded variations such as "Life is a yo-yo/ And God ties knots in the string," "Man Needs Anarchy," and "My favorite teacher took a drink / But he will drink no more / For what he thought was H_2O / Was H_2SO_4." In a paper in 1978 Read wrote, "Random writings on walls are a valid form of folklore. . . . They afford insight into folk attitudes." Graffiti are also among the most obvious products of the play spirit—the compulsion to toy with words, which Read sees as the source of much of the language's vitality. But Read is a fan of graffiti for another reason as well: as he pointed out in his book on American graffiti, why *not* use good old American terms, simple and direct, rather than their fancied-up equivalents? "That anyone should pass up the well-established colloquial words of the language and have recourse to the Latin *defecate*, *urinate*, and *have sexual intercourse*, is indicative of grave mental unhealth," he wrote.

Read's own way of applying the play spirit is to make his search for linguistic sources a pleasure in itself. For example, one of his key historical sources is diaries of foreign visitors to the United States. While yielding, in Read's words, "a great amount of social criticism and verbal criticism," the diaries tell an entertaining batch of tales and provide details of daily life of the sort that fill in the corners of his research. (They may also serve to fulfill, vicariously, Read's early longing to be a travel writer himself.) "A travel writer will go to a new culture and talk about the things that impress him as being fresh and strange, and consequently you get a new insight, through his eyes, of what the culture is like," Read says. Travel diaries have been a major source for Read almost from the beginning of his studies, and, in fact, they form both the basis and the inspiration for the longest-running project of his life—a project that contains bits and pieces of all the themes of his sixty years of work, and that is closer to his heart than the work on "O.K.," however much "O.K." may have engaged the public interest. When, two years ago, Read found himself in the hospital with an intestinal ailment that forced him to confront his mortality, it was this project he thought of, and this project above any others that it pained him to think of leaving unfinished.

Read has called it, variously, a Dictionary of the English of England and a Historical Dictionary of Briticisms, and it is the most ambitious work of his career. Although it is a book about British English, it is, oddly, one of the most American of projects, intimately tied to the fervent respect for the American point of view which runs through all his work. In fact, it grew out of his work on the Dictionary of American English—and his initiation into the use of travel diaries.

"One of our sources was British travellers who came over to America, and they would make comments about the strange Americanisms that they heard," Read says. "Travellers were one of our principal sources in getting good, rich material. And it occurred to me that if the British travellers in this country see strange things, wouldn't American travellers who were in England make comments on British English? I began looking in American travel books. They're hard to find—many of them are outdated, just growing moldy on the back shelves of libraries—but I dug them out and found that there was indeed a very rich source of American comment on strange things that could be heard in England. That gave me the idea that there really should be a dictionary done of the speech of England, using American English as the norm against which to measure British English. All the other dictionaries of that sort had been based on a British norm from which American English diverged.

But it's just as reasonable to say that, since we got our language from England in the earliest time, we've inherited a common, joint language, and that the British are making differentiations from this joint base. If you judge it by American English, you get an interesting view of modern English."

It was a revolutionary thesis, which only someone weaned on Mencken's "American Language" could have been brash enough to suggest. But in the aftermath of Mencken's groundbreaking work Read's proposal found a ready audience, and in 1938 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to create his dictionary of Briticisms. In an article in *The American Oxonian*, in July of 1938, he announced his plans for the dictionary. "It is to be hoped," he wrote, "that the work will abound with extracts of a racy, human quality"—a goal that could be applied to the bulk of Read's work—and he added, "It also should throw into sharp relief the differences between British culture and American culture."

As it happened, Read spent only a year of his two-year Guggenheim in England; the coming European war forced him back to the States. But he continued his work in New York, at the Public Library, which, he points out, "is very, very rich in research materials; I could do my work practically as well at the New York Public as I could anywhere in the world." He goes on, "By 1941, my material was nicely rounded. I really wish I had published it then, but I had to make a living after my fellowship was over, so I accepted a teaching position, which took up my time. If I had published it earlier in the game, I could have produced a very respectable book that would be the data base for any later studies on the subject, and I would have been wise to do that. But I just didn't. I was looking forward to a bit more perfection than I could ever hope to achieve."

What Read doesn't mention, until pressed, is that this type of project is not normally undertaken by one person working alone; normally, dictionaries—even such specific ones—are the product of more than one collector. And so it looked for a while as if the dictionary might go the way of the semantic guide and other projects of Read's that haven't got done—not the only project that he regrets leaving

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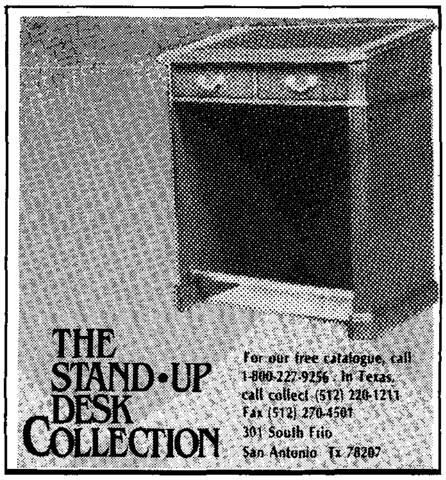

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unfinished but the only one that would truly haunt him. "I don't mean to be melodramatic or anything, but when I was in the hospital I realized that I could have died, and that my material would be lost unless I did something about it," Read says. He finally broke down and asked for the help of a collaborator, John Algeo, a professor at the University of Georgia, to computerize, edit, and update his work. And so, sometime soon, the rows of fifty-year-old handwritten file cards in Read's study, yellowed with age and sporting homemade tabs to indicate alphabetical categories, will travel down to Georgia and meet the late-twentieth-century technology of dictionary-making.

It's understandable that a man's longest-running project would be one of his most precious, but Read's sense of urgency about the Briticisms dictionary is based only in part on a nostalgic affection for this most familiar work, and is only incidentally influenced by his fondness for England as almost a second home since his stints at Oxford and, later, at the British Museum. The larger reasons are easy to divine: What dearer dream, for a lover of dictionaries—someone who has edited them, philosophized about them, studied their history, and defended their role in our lives—than to create his own? And what better sort of dictionary, for a scholar like Read, than what he calls an evidence dictionary—a dictionary that puts its ear to the ground and, with no hint of moral judgment, discovers what we say to each other when we are being most ourselves, when we are being "racy and human"?

This dictionary will also be the logical conclusion of Read's longtime fascination with the linguistic relationship between Americans and Britons. In the splitting of the two cultures there exists a veritable laboratory of language: what happens when a single language branches into two parallel languages, and what do the differences say about us? In the end, what Read is looking for is not an understanding of the British but an understanding of Americans. What better way to see American culture clearly than to see it in contrast to another, so similar, culture? To understand the difference between Britons' calling themselves "subjects" and Americans' calling themselves "citizens" is to get a glimpse of a people struggling to create an identity. It is as revealing of our history as a look at the names we once considered for the Rocky Mountains and for the towns that inched their way across the prairie. What power for a people to have—to look at a boundless continent and know that it is theirs for the naming—and what a longing for cohesiveness and security emerges in the repetition of town names all the way west: Harmony, Independence, Concord, Amity. How strangely logical that in such a a looming vastness Americans should invent words and phrases of their own, words that lighten the load and defuse frontier fear: not just picking up Indian phrases like "bury the hatchet" and "smoke a peace pipe" but creating utter silliness like "hornswoggle," "brassfaceitiveness," "blustrification," and "discombobulate"—the play spirit at work.

In Read's philosophy, every word (even—or perhaps most of all—the playful ones) reflects back to us at every instant an image of our culture, carrying with it glimmers of the past. The "meaning" of a word, mutable as it is, is only the beginning. What each word is really about is history, psychology, emotion—impossibly rich evidence of a gloriously imprecise and imperfect world. In this philosophy, it's clear why you can't judge such a monumental and finally uncontainable entity as language—can't say that it is right or wrong, or that it is going to the dogs—any more than you can judge the fact that the sun rises in the east. Whatever is, says this philosophy, is right. What you *can* do as a linguist is record the language faithfully, listen to it with an open mind. And then you can, of course, have fun with it.

Read has always known how to do that best of all. For him, everything comes back, eventually, to the play spirit—which, he said in a speech that he gave in 1987 to the Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States, "may even have been the prime mover in the development of language itself," more fundamental a force than the need for communication. "It is possible for us as linguists to pursue our studies in this same exuberant spirit," Read went on, and so, with what some might at one time have called brassfaceitiveness but with a minimum of blustrification, he does.

—Michelle Stacey

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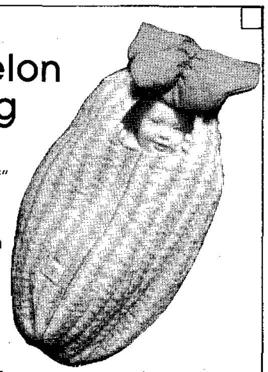

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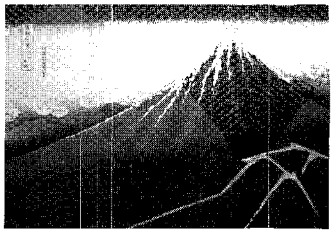

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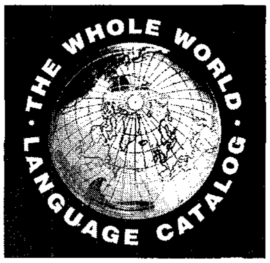
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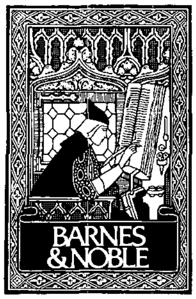

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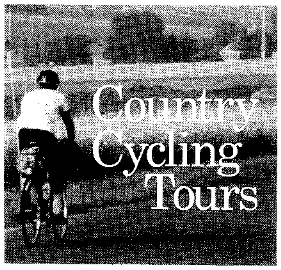

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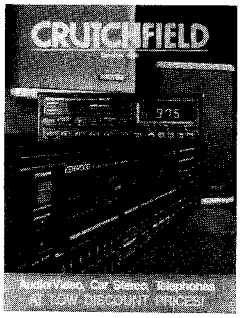

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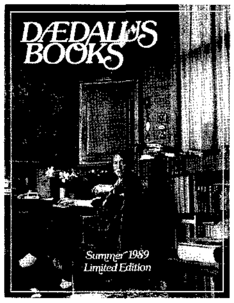

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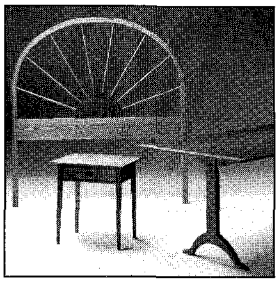

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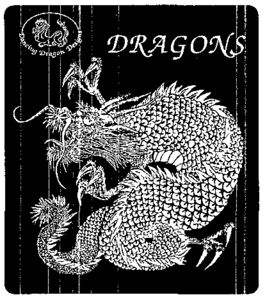

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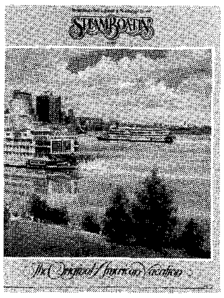

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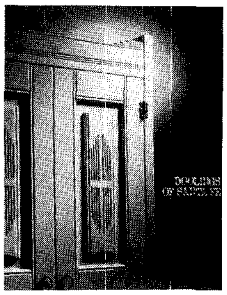

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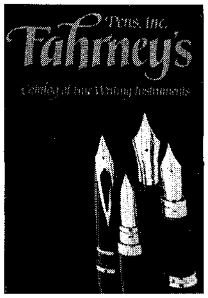

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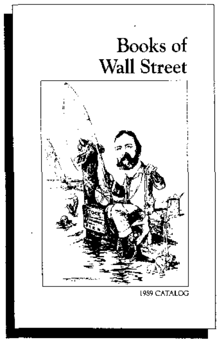

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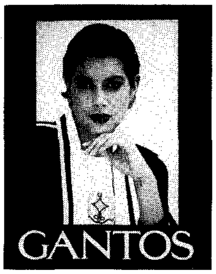

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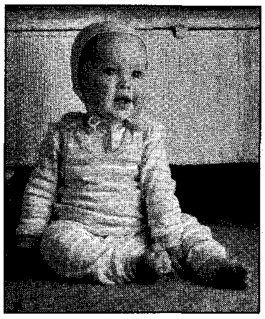

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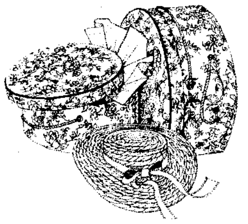

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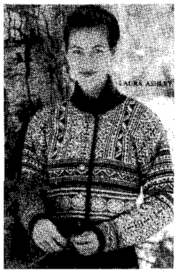

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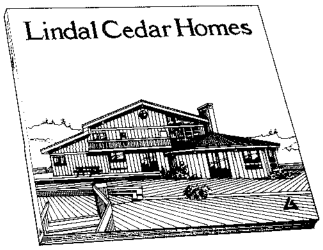

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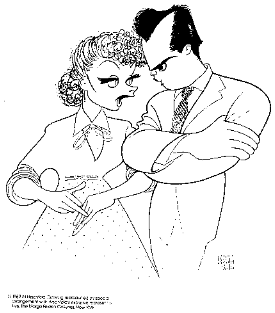

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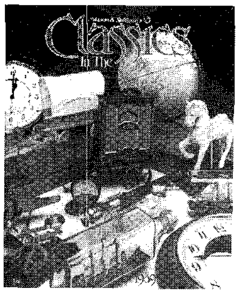

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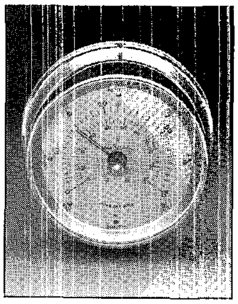

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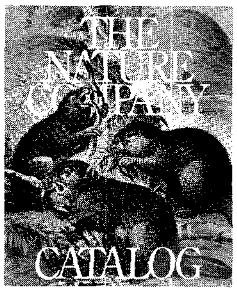

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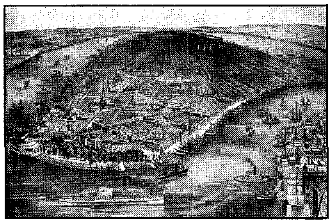

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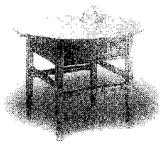

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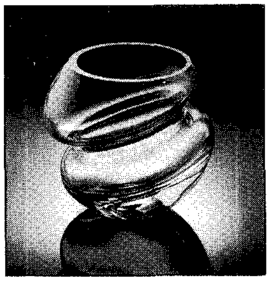

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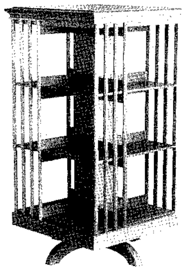

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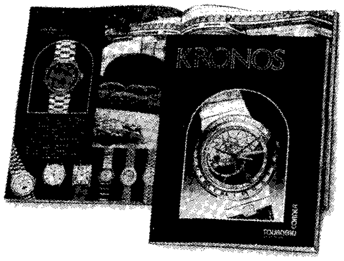

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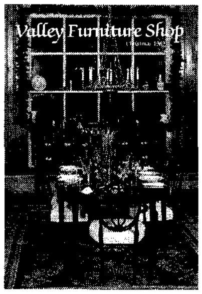

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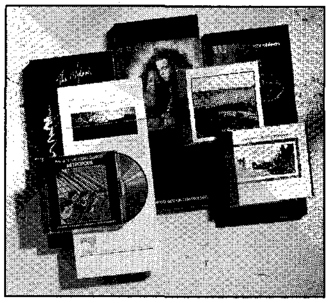

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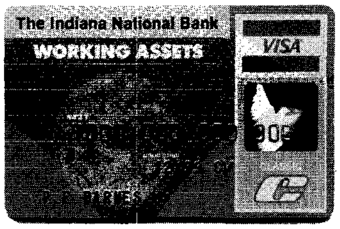

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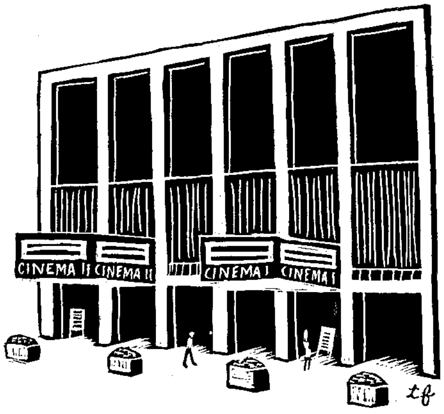
THE CURRENT CINEMA

Dead in the Water

WHEN people compare movies with dreams, they're usually talking about the terrifying, irrational power that projected images can have, or about the helplessness and solitude we sometimes feel as we're pulled along in the dark. The only way in which most of this summer's movies are like dreams is that it's so hard to remember them. We may, upon leaving the theatre, have a vague sense that something has been nibbling at our consciousness; but, whatever it was, it didn't linger. (If I were pressed to account for my whereabouts on a given date in August, 1989, I'd have to think twice before claiming I was at the movies watching "Cookie" or "Shirley Valentine" or "The Abyss" or "The Little Thief"; even hypnosis might not dredge up enough details to prove that I had actually seen any of them.) Among the movies currently in release, one of the very few that stay in the mind is Herk Harvey's "Carnival of Souls." This bleak, unnerving low-budget horror picture was made in 1961 and released (mostly to drive-ins, on a double bill with something called "The Devil's Messenger") in 1962, and hasn't had a theatrical run in New York until now. It's one of those movies that turn up on television at two in the morning, for people who prefer to take their bad dreams in the form of lurid, cheesy shockers interrupted by commercials. In the twenty-seven years since it was first dumped into theatres, this picture has never quite gone away. Even when its only life was as flickering, jumpy images on a small screen, it wouldn't stay dead. It's a real hour-of-the-wolf movie: it wakes you up and keeps you up.

The movie begins with an accident: a car with three young people inside plunges off a bridge into a river in Kansas. The townspeople gather to search for the bodies, alive or dead. Long after they've given up hope of finding survivors, a blond woman, Mary Henry (Candace Hilligoss), emerges from the water; she can't remember how she got out of the car. Soon after that—it's apparently just a day or two later—we see her pounding away at an enormous pipe organ. Despite her trauma, she seems to want to get on with her life: she's due to begin work as a church organist in Utah, and she's determined to arrive on time. On the long drive to Utah, Mary starts seeing things: the face of a pale, unsmiling man appears at the window of her moving car; a bit later, he seems to be standing in the middle of the deserted highway. For the rest of the movie, this ghastly guy won't leave her alone: wherever she goes, he turns up, watching her. Adding to the spookiness is a huge abandoned building at the edge of the Great Salt Lake: without quite knowing why, the young woman finds herself drawn to this looming edifice, a failed resort with a cavernous ballroom. She's afraid she's going crazy. We suspect that what's going on is a good deal direr than that.

The supernatural answer proves to be the correct one—no surprise. But "Carnival of Souls" isn't a conventional ghost story. Although it's obvious that Mary Henry is sort of *different*—not fully engaged in life, let's say—the manner of her not-quite-being is unusual. She seems to flicker in and out of existence. In the movie's most original scenes, Harvey disengages his heroine from her surroundings for several minutes at a time. At one point, Mary goes into a cubicle in a department store to try on a dress, and when she comes out she can't hear anything—worse, no one (except the audience) can hear or see her. It's a terrifying sequence, an unbearably direct expression of the world's indifference. (Imagine "Topper" directed by Ingmar Bergman.) After a while, she snaps out of it, but her relationship to everyday life remains fragile, tentative. She's more alone than any other horror-movie heroine you've ever seen. Her living quarters, in a boarding house, are as drab and featureless as Janet Leigh's motel room in "Psycho." She's a kind of existential transient: her life fades in and out, as if she were watching it on an old TV with unpredictable reception.



"Carnival of Souls," which was made, in black and white, for about thirty thousand dollars, by a bunch of industrial filmmakers based in Lawrence, Kansas, uses its cheapness expressively. The performances are variable, the settings are stark, the sound recording is erratic, and somehow it all works. The movie keeps going dead and then coming back to life. Some of the picture's stiffness, especially in the dialogue scenes, is clearly not intentional, but some of it is: Harvey (who has never made another feature) pulls us through the movie by alternating scenes of everyday life with visions of death, and daring us to locate ourselves; in the flat, neither-here-nor-there landscape of "Carnival of Souls," we're never entirely sure where we are. George Romero has claimed this picture as an inspiration for "Night of the Living Dead"; the shockingly avid ghouls of his movie are obviously descended from the dead who dance in the ruined ballroom at the climax of Harvey's film. And David Lynch must have seen it, too. Now that this inspired oddity has been resurrected with a brand-new 35-mm. print, we may regret not seeing it in the small hours, alone in front of the tube. But, no matter how many people are in the theatre or what time of day it is, "Carnival of Souls" has the power to detach you from your surroundings and put you in the middle of its own distinctive nowhere. For eighty-eight minutes, you're immersed in it; and when you come up, the world looks stranger.

WATCHING Terence Davies' "Distant Voices, Still Lives" feels a bit like being underwater, too. Davies holds us under for too long, though: there's a big cement block of Art tied to our feet. This airless, lugubrious, overcomposed movie, which has won awards at several international festivals, is almost scarier than "Carnival of Souls," because its maker seems truly indifferent to life—off in a world of his own, which denies the existence of the audience, or of anyone except him. It's an autobiographical

"Remember, dinner at the Berglunds'."

• •

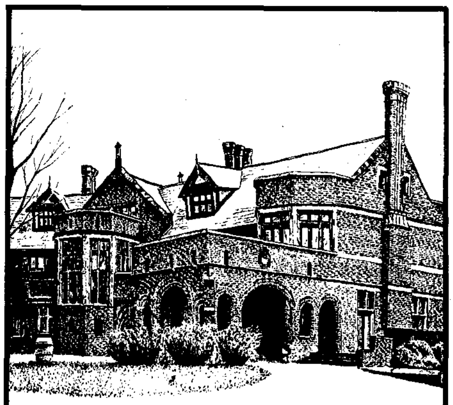
movie, set in Liverpool in the forties and early fifties, and showing scenes from the life of a working-class family—father, mother, son, and two daughters—and their friends. In essence, it's kitchen-sink drama: Dad's a brute, Mom's a stoic sufferer, the kids rebel in pathetic, stunted ways, and everybody's trapped, dead in the water. What's original—and creepy—about Davies' treatment of this familiar material is his relentless aestheticizing of it. The film is divided into two sections. In the first, "Distant Voices," the wedding of one daughter and the funeral of the father provide framing devices for a series of chronologically jumbled memories: chance remarks and old photographs dissolve into evocations of the past. In the second, "Still Lives," there's another wedding—the son's—and the memories this time are mostly verbal: people yelling at each other because their lives have turned out so badly. As if this tricky structure weren't enough, Davies also makes use (à la Dennis Potter) of a ton of old popular songs—some heard on the radio, some performed by the actors in pub sing-alongs, with the camera panning slowly across their faces to underline the poignancy. And he messes with the color process, too: the colors are deliberately desaturated, so the images all have a dull-brown tone.

It's difficult to think of another filmmaker who has taken such pains to get revenge on his past. Davies uses all the art-film techniques at his command to kill his family, embalm them, and rearrange their bodies in a series of lifeless, pristine tableaux. He's the master; finally, *he* has control over *them*. He has the right to be angry about his upbringing, but the way he expresses it reeks of bad faith: he uses his talent oppressively—to dominate those who have hurt him, and to demonstrate his own superiority. He combines the skills of an artist with the sensibility of a taxidermist.

ON a clear day, a few more movies—tiny, indistinct forms bobbing on the surface of memory—are just visible in the distance:

"The Little Thief." Claude Miller's movie, set in the early fifties, is the story of a rebellious provincial teenager named Janine (Charlotte Gainsbourg). Living with her aunt and uncle on a poor street in a small French village, Janine amuses herself by stealing cigarettes, fancy lingerie, and other things that will enable her to feel some connection with the glamorous life she sees in the movies. Eventually, she leaves home, and finds work as a maid in a bourgeois household. She has a couple of affairs—one with a shy, cultured married man, another with a reckless kid—but things just seem to go wrong for her. She lands in a reformatory and then, for lack of anyplace else to go, ends up back where she started, in the grim village. The screenplay (by Miller, his wife, Annie, and Luc Béraud) is based on an original story by François Truffaut and Claude de Givray; Truffaut himself reportedly planned to direct a film of the story. According to Miller, Truffaut's initial conception of "The 400 Blows" included the character of Janine (whose name is probably an homage both to his mother and to the wife of his mentor, André Bazin) in addition to the boy, Antoine Doinel, played by Jean-Pierre Léaud. "The Little Thief" bears recognizable traces of the late New Wave director: it's gentle-natured and sympathetic to the young, and its structure is casual and anecdotal, like the Doinel movies. What it lacks is Truffaut's energy. Miller is a perfectly decent craftsman, and the movie is never unwatchable, but nothing drives it forward from one scene to the next, and Janine's lucklessness and her tough-kid spirit don't resonate as Antoine's do. For Truffaut (as for the other filmmakers of his generation in France), the story wasn't the most important thing; it's all that's left of him in "The Little Thief."

"The Abyss." The most attractive quality of James Cameron's previous movies, "The Terminator" and "Aliens," was their B-movie straightforwardness. Cameron has never been an especially imaginative writer or director, but in those pictures he was smart enough to keep both the action and the characters' emotions strong, simple, and clear: his hard-edged adventure movies had no shame and plenty of conviction. In "The Abyss" he seems utterly lost: he's trying to reach down farther into himself, and everything he clutches at runs through his fingers. This undersea epic is more complex technically than anything else Cameron has done, and, disastrously, he aims for emotional complexity as well. The main characters are an es-



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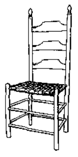

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tranged married couple (Ed Harris and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) who are forced to work together in an emergency salvage operation—searching the depths for a nuclear submarine that met with a mysterious accident. Cameron wants to turn this routine plot into a metaphor for the couple's attempt to salvage their relationship. Although that isn't, to say the least, a very subtle idea, he might have managed to put it over if he had concentrated on the action and let the meanings take care of themselves. But the action sequences are confusingly edited, the dialogue is painfully explicit, and the B-movie suspense devices he uses (such as placing a raging psycho on board the salvage vessel) tend to violate the integrity of the metaphor. The big message is: You have to touch bottom—way, way down there—before you can see the light. The light at the movie's climax, unfortunately, takes the form of benign, pastel-colored aliens (provided by the Dream Quest Images effects factory). Much earlier, in the picture's one effective scene, the enigmatic life form has manifested itself as a column of water that functions as a liquid mirror, taking on the features of whoever looks at it. This suggestive notion seems to come out of nowhere (or maybe a Tarkovsky picture), and Cameron quickly sends it back there. For the rest of this very long movie, no one sees himself reflected in the water again.

"Cookie." This gangster comedy, directed by Susan Seidelman, is about as disposable as a movie can be. Cheerful and empty-headed, it might as well be about accountants or grade-school teachers; the humor has no edge, despite the violent profession of most of the characters. (The movie is actually more lightweight than "Married to the Mob"—to which it owes quite a bit.) Emily Lloyd, the British teen-ager who gave such a smashing performance in "Wish You Were Here," plays Cookie, the illegitimate daughter of a mobster (Peter Falk) about to be released from prison. Once he's out, they get to know each other, work together against his enemies, and so on. Lloyd, using a Brooklyn accent, is game and appealing but not very interesting here. Seidelman has directed the vibrant young actress to act "kooky," like the Madonna character in her "Desperately Seeking Susan"—and dresses her star like Madonna, too, in hip thrift-shop outfits. Lloyd is reduced to rolling her eyes and chewing her gum extra vigorously; the eccentricities of her character are so arbitrary that she seems a little lost, unmoored. Falk is more at home: he has an effortless dignity and great timing. The most entertaining thing about "Cookie" is listening to the supporting actors rasp away at their silly dialogue. This is the hoarsest cast in memory. Michael V. Gazzo, Brenda Vaccaro, Lionel Stander: does this movie have a scene in which armies of nodes attack everyone's vocal cords, or did I just dream that?

"Shirley Valentine." Willy Russell, who wrote the play (and movie) "Educating Rita," gives us another Englishwoman learning a thing or two about life. This time, it's a housewife in her forties whose kids are grown and gone and whose husband is so unresponsive that she spends a lot of her time talking to the kitchen wall. (Russell's original play is a monologue.) A friend persuades her to come along on a two-week holiday in Greece, and Shirley, away from her dull husband and her constricted life, starts to enjoy herself for the first time since her adolescence. But she's not just having a fling or reliving her giddy youth—the writer wants us to understand that she's experiencing deeper, maturer pleasures. In adapting the play to the screen, Russell has given flesh and blood (sort of) to all the characters in the heroine's anecdotes. It's not a one-woman show anymore, though it's still a showcase for perky, round-faced Pauline Collins. She's very likable, and her performance is mercifully restrained: she almost manages to keep us from gagging on the playwright's smug wisdom. Lewis Gilbert's direction is long on maturity and short on pleasure: the picture moves at a careful, measured, guided-tour pace. When a movie's as stodgy and lulling as this, we're likely to have some trouble accepting it as a ringing affirmation of life. By the end, poor Shirley seems more than ever like a lost soul: an Edna O'Brien character who woke up and found herself on "The Love Boat."

—TERRENCE RAFFERTY

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SOCIAL NOTES FROM ALL OVER

[*Headline in the Mattoon* (*Ill.*) *Journal Gazette*]

ODDS AND ENDS EDITOR
WEDS AND USES GAS GRILL

THE THEATRE

Esprit de Corps

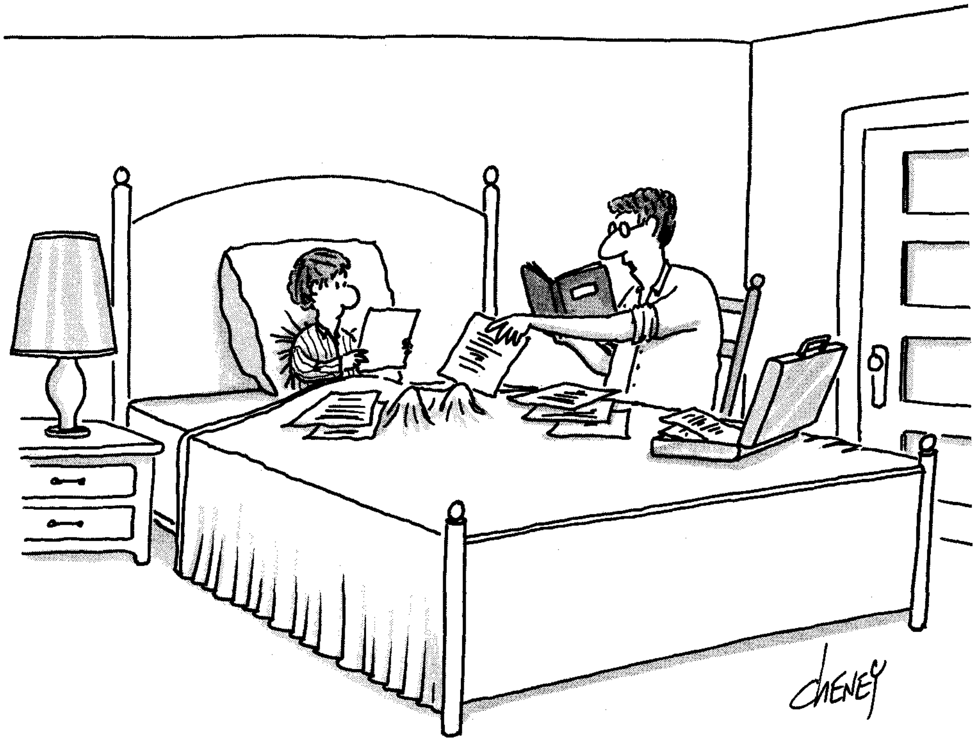
JIM DALE is very funny as a civilian performer, in and out of drag, in Peter Nichols' musical "Privates on Parade," which opened last week at the Roundabout. The time is 1948, the place Malaysia, where a unit of the British Army has been sent to put on a show, presumably to keep up the spirits of the soldiers who have been sent there to deal with an "emergency"—a guerrilla action by Chinese-sponsored Communists. Mr. Dale plays Terri Dennis (given the honorary title of captain)—a homosexual and a cheap but clever actor, whose stock in trade is imitations of, say, Noël Coward and Marlene Dietrich, and who leads the company in the songs and dances. Mr. Dale is a very good dancer, with—as if I had to tell you—a good, strong singing voice. "Privates" consists, for the most part, of the show, but there is also a story, whose frictions and jealousies keep interrupting the action.

The second act opens with Terri singing a song that goes, "Could you please inform us how we came to lose the war that we won in 1945?" Then we learn that a young soldier, heterosexual and fresh from England, has fallen in love with the only female in the troupe, who is half Welsh and half Indian, and that therefore, unbeknownst to him, he is in personal danger from the mean-tempered sergeant-major, who has been the woman's lover. The officer in charge, who is stiff and correct (and is beautifully played by Simon Jones), inadvertently leads his men into an ambush, with serious consequences. This story, which I have spelled out so literally, is done in quick spurts between the clever, often tuneful numbers.

"Privates" has been cannily directed by Larry Carpenter, and Denis King's music is a perfect complement to Mr. Nichols' words. Mr. Dale gives a fine, wholehearted performance in a role as comic and touching and rich as any other I've ever seen him in—as good as his recent lead in "Joe Egg." He was the guiding spirit behind this revival, and no wonder. (The play was first done in 1977, in England, and was revived at the Long Wharf a couple of years ago.) I also admired Jim Fyfe as the young soldier, Donald Burton as the bad-tempered sergeant-major, and Donna Murphy as the object of their affections. The settings, costumes, and lighting, all notably good, were designed by Loren Sherman, Lindsay W. Davis, and Marcia Madeira, respectively. "Privates on Parade" will remain at the Roundabout only through September 30th. After that, with luck, it may move to more spacious quarters.

IF one is determined, as Joseph Papp is, to present the complete plays of Shakespeare, "Titus Andronicus" is bound to come up, and the only thing to do is to get it over with as decently as possible. Mr. Papp is presenting, in the Park, through September 3rd, a straightforward, if somewhat tame, production of this early play, which is less a tragedy than an inventory of atrocities. Kenneth Tynan, reviewing an overheated 1957 production that was directed by Peter Brook and starred Laurence Olivier, sidestepped synopsis, and even when one has read the play its events are unlikely to stick in one's mind. Titus, a victorious Roman general, has lost two of his sons in a recent battle against Tamora, Queen of the Goths, and decides that one of her sons must be sacrificed in revenge. (By actual count, twenty-two of Titus's twenty-five sons have been killed.) Tamora's evil lover, a Moor named Aaron, arranges for Titus's daughter Lavinia to be raped, with her hands cut off and her tongue pulled out. The butchery goes on. To the credit of Michael Maggio, the director, the stage is never allowed to swim in gore; the blood is indicated but it doesn't drip. To Mr. Maggio's further credit, the performances are kept within bounds and the text is made as clear as possible. Donald Moffat's Titus is a quiet stoic—perhaps too quiet for a man whose heart must crack. When he holds Lavinia (Pamela Gien) in his arms, she becomes Cordelia to his Lear. Kate Mulgrew is properly assertive as the wicked Queen, and Keith David is strong, and even interesting, as Aaron. Jon De Vries, as Titus's staunch brother, and David Purdham, as his son (still extant at the final curtain), do well, too. But the evening is almost a total loss, the actors being more sinned against by the playwright than sinning. It's hard to believe that Olivier and Brook could have made something of all this.

—EDITH OLIVER



" 'Then Jack traded his cow for five magic beans.' Here's a copy of the contract, the accounting summary, the insurance waiver, the shareholders' briefing, and the receipt."

LETTER FROM LOS ANGELES

AUGUST 15

A GOOD part of any day in Los Angeles is spent driving, alone, through streets devoid of meaning to the driver, which is one reason the place exhilarates some people and floods others with an amorphous unease. There can be about these hours spent in transit a seductive unconnectedness. Conventional information is missing. Context clues are missing. In Culver City and in Echo Park and in East Los Angeles there are the same pastel bungalows. There are the same leggy poinsettias and the same trees of pink and yellow hibiscus. There are the same laundromats, body shops, strip shopping malls, the same travel agencies offering bargain fares on the national airlines of Costa Rica and El Salvador. "SAN SALVADOR," the signs promise on Beverly Boulevard and on Pico and on Alvarado and on Soto. "SAN JOSE! GUATEMALA!" There is the same sound, that of the car radio—tuned in my case to KRLA, an AM station that identifies itself as "the heart and soul of rock and roll" and is given to dislocating programming concepts, like doing the top hits ("Baby, It's You," "Break It to Me Gently," "The Lion Sleeps Tonight") of 1962. Another day, another KRLA concept: "The Day the Music Died," an exact radio re-creation of the day in 1959, including news briefs (Detroit may market compacts), when the plane carrying Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the Big Bopper crashed, near Clear Lake, Iowa. A few days later, KRLA reports a solid response to "The Day the Music Died," including "a call from Ritchie Valens' aunt."

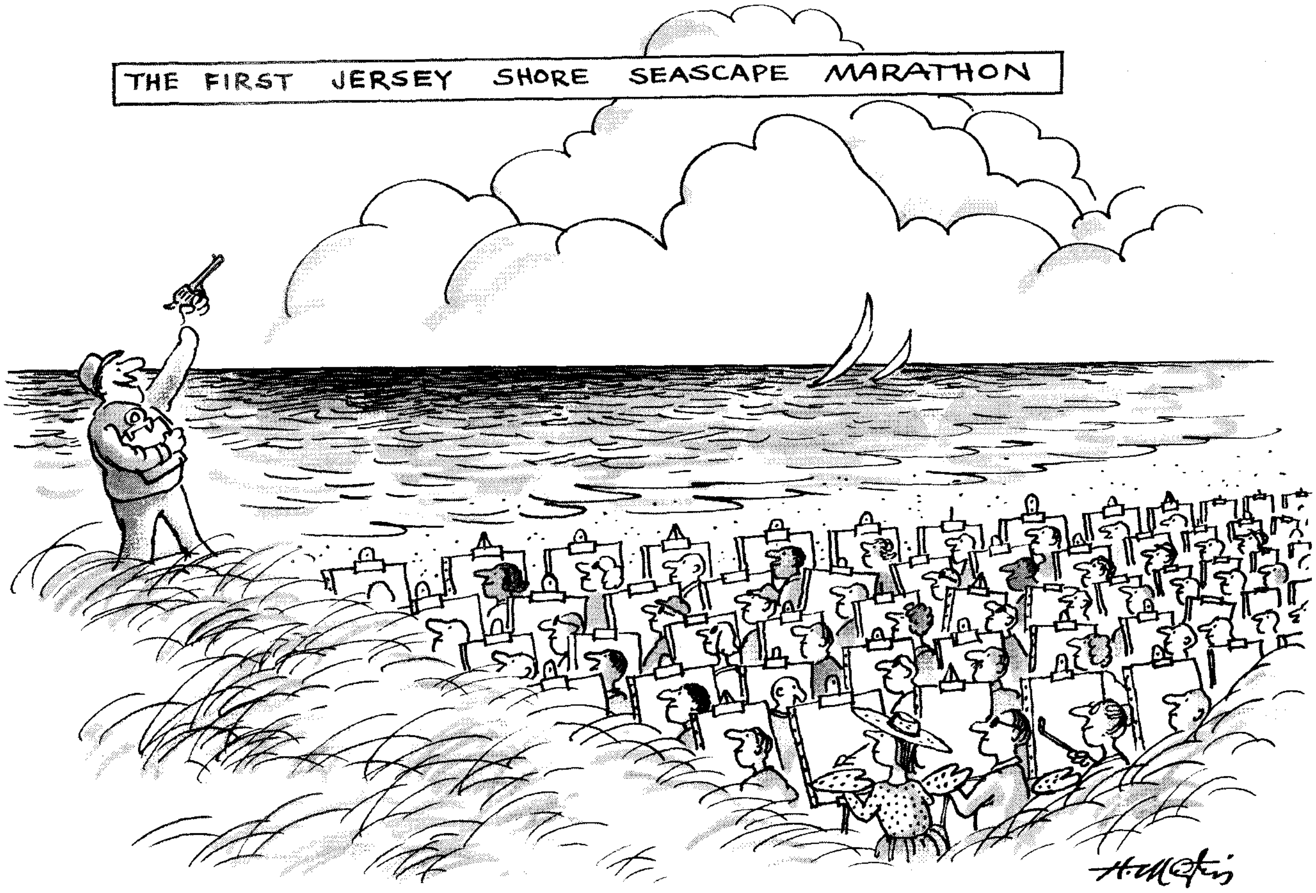
Such tranced hours are, for many people who live in Los Angeles, the dead center of being there, but there is nothing about them to encourage the normal impulse toward recognition, or narrative connection. Those glosses on the human comedy (the widow's heartbreak, the bad cop, the mother-and-child reunion) which lend dramatic structure to more traditional forms of urban life are hard to come by here. There are in the pages of the Los Angeles newspapers no Crack Queens, no Coma Moms or Terror Tots. Events may be lurid, but are rarely personalized. "MOTHER APOLOGIZES TO HER CHILD, DRIVES BOTH OFF CLIFF," read a headline in the Los Angeles *Times* one morning last December. (Stories like this are relegated in the *Times* either to the Metro section or to page 3, which is sometimes called the "freak-death page," not its least freaky aspect being that quite arresting accounts of death by Clorox or by rattlesnake or by dumpster tend to appear and then vanish, with no follow-up.) Here was the story, which had to do with a young woman who had lived with her daughter, Brooke, in a Redondo Beach condominium and was said by a neighbor to have "looked like she was a little down":

> A Redondo Beach woman apologized to her 7-year-old daughter, then apparently tried to take both their lives by driving over a cliff in the Malibu area Tuesday morning, authorities said.
>
> The mother, identified by the county coroner's office as Susan Sinclair, 29, was killed, but the child survived without serious injury.
>
> "I'm sorry I have to do this," the woman was quoted as telling the child just before she suddenly swerved off Malibu Canyon Road about 2½ miles north of Pacific Coast Highway.

"I'm sorry I have to do this." That was the last we heard of Susan and Brooke Sinclair. When I moved here from New York, in 1964, I at first found this absence of narrative a deprivation. At the end of two years here, I realized (quite suddenly, alone one morning in the car) that I had come to find narrative sentimental. This remains a radical difference between the two cities, and also between the ways the residents of those cities view each other.

AROUND Division 47 of Los Angeles Municipal Court, the downtown courtroom where this spring and summer a preliminary hearing was held to determine whether the charges brought in the 1983 murder of a thirty-three-year-old road-show promoter named Roy Alexander Radin should be dismissed or the defendants should be bound over to superior court for arraignment and trial, it was often said that there were "in the works" five movies, four books, and "countless" pieces about the case. Sometimes it was said that there were four movies and five books "in the works," or one movie and two books, or two movies and six books. There were, in any event, "big balls" in the air. "Everybody's working this one," a reporter covering the trial said one morning as we stood waiting to get patted down at the entrance to the courtroom, a security measure prompted in part by a telephoned bomb threat and encouraged by the general wish of everyone involved to make this a noticeable case. "Major money," he added.

This was curious. Murder cases are generally of interest to the extent that they suggest some anomaly or impart some lesson about the world they reveal, but there seemed neither anomalies nor lessons in the murder of Roy Radin, who was last seen alive getting into a limousine to go to dinner at a Beverly Hills restaurant, La Scala, and was next seen decomposed, four weeks later, in a canyon off Interstate 5. Among the defendants actually present for the preliminary hearing was Karen DeLayne (Lanie) Jacobs Greenberger, a fairly attractive hard case, lately of South Florida, where her husband was said to have formerly been the No. 2 man in the cocaine operation run by Carlos Lehder, the only major Colombian drug figure to have been tried and convicted in the United States. (Lanie Greenberger herself was said to have done considerable business in this line, and to have had nearly a million dollars in cocaine and cash stolen from her Sherman Oaks house not long before Roy Radin disappeared.) The other defendants present were William Mentzer and Alex Marti, somewhat less attractive hard cases, lately of Larry Flynt's security staff. (Larry Flynt is the publisher of *Hustler*, and one of the collateral artifacts that turned up in the Radin case was a million-dollar check he had written in 1983 to the late Mitchell Livingston WerBell III, a former arms dealer who operated a counterterrorism school outside Atlanta and described himself as a retired lieutenant-general of the Royal Free Afghan Army. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Depart-


THE FIRST JERSEY SHORE SEASCAPE MARATHON

"On your mark. Get set. Go!"

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ment said that Flynt had written the check to WerBell as payment on a contract to kill Frank Sinatra, Hugh Hefner, Bob Guccione, and Walter Annenberg. Larry Flynt's lawyer said that there had been no contract, and described the check, on which payment was stopped, as a dinner-party joke.) There was also an absent defendant, a third Flynt security man, fighting extradition from Maryland.

In other words, this was a genre case, and the genre, L.A. noir, was familiar. There is a noir case every year or two in Los Angeles. There is right now, for example, the Wonderland case, which involves the 1981 bludgeoning to death of four people and is due to come to trial later this year. The Wonderland case, so called because the bludgeoning took place in a house on Wonderland Avenue in Laurel Canyon, turns, like the Radin case, on a million-dollar cocaine theft, but features even more deeply noir players, including a night-club entrepreneur and convicted cocaine dealer named Adel Nasrallah, a.k.a. Eddie Nash; a pornographic-movie star, now dead of AIDS, named John C. Holmes, a.k.a. Johnny Wadd; and a young man named Scott Thorson, who was, at the time he first testified in the case, an inmate in the Los Angeles County Jail (Scott Thorson is, in the predictable ecology of the criminal-justice system, the star witness for the state in the Wonderland case), and who in 1982 sued Liberace on the ground that he had been promised a hundred thousand dollars a year for life in return for his services as Liberace's lover, driver, travel secretary, and animal trainer.

In this context, there seemed nothing particularly novel about the Radin case. It was true that there were, floating around the edges of the story, several other unnatural deaths—for example, that of Lanie Greenberger's husband, Larry Greenberger, a.k.a. Vinnie De Angelo, who either shot himself or was shot in the head last September on the front porch of his house in Okeechobee, Florida—but those deaths were essentially unsurprising. It was also true that the Radin case offered absorbing sidebar details. I was interested in, for example, how much security Larry Flynt apparently had patrolling Doheny Estates, where his house was, and Century City, where the *Hustler* offices were. I was interested in Dean Kahn, who ran the limousine service that provided the stretch Cadillac with smoked windows in which Roy Radin took, in the language of this particular revealed world, his last ride. I was interested in how Roy Radin, before he came to Los Angeles and decided to go to dinner at La Scala, had endeavored to make his way in the world by touring high-school auditoriums with Tiny Tim, Frank Fontaine, and a corps of tap-dancing dwarfs.

Still, promoters of tap-dancing dwarfs who get done in by hard cases have not been, historically, the stuff of which five movies, four books, and countless pieces are made. The almost febrile interest in this case derived not from the principals but from what was essentially a cameo role, played by Robert Evans. Robert Evans had been head of production at Paramount during the golden period of "The Godfather" and "Love Story" and

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"Rosemary's Baby," had moved on to produce independently such successful motion pictures as "Chinatown" and "Marathon Man," and was, during what was generally agreed to be a dry spell in his career (he had recently made a forty-five-minute videotape on the life of John Paul II, and had announced that he was writing an autobiography, to be called "The Kid Stays in the Picture"), a district attorney's dream: a quite possibly desperate, quite famously risk-oriented, high-visibility figure with low-life connections.

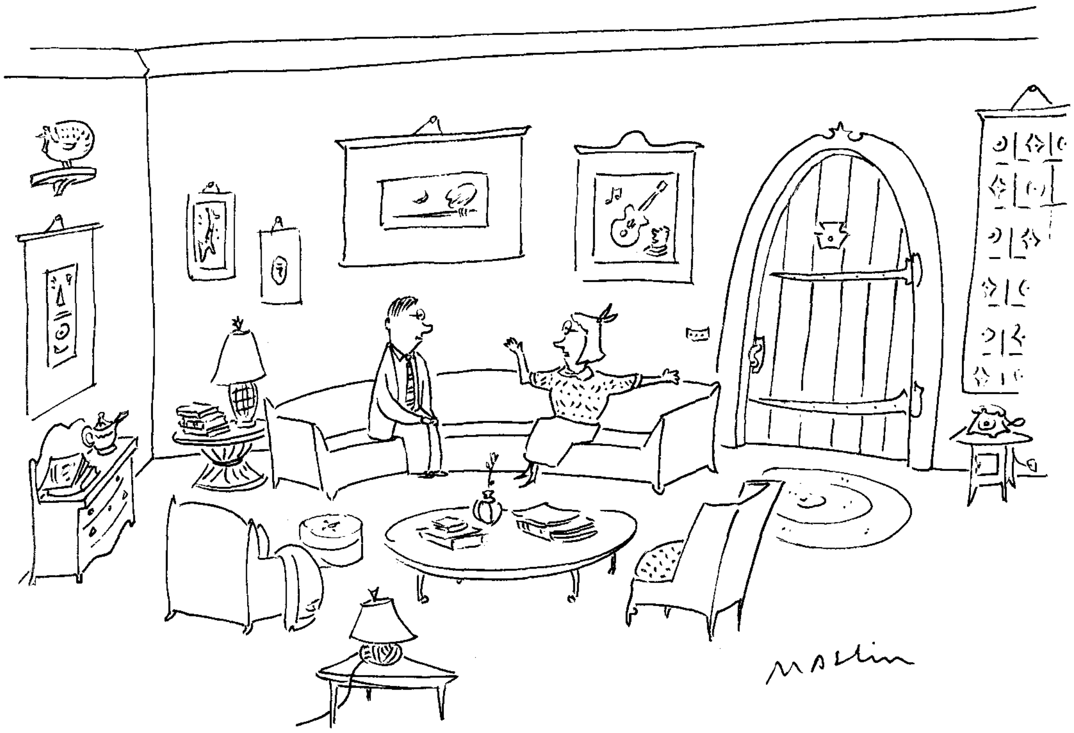
It was the contention of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office that Lanie Greenberger had hired her co-defendants to kill Roy Radin after he refused to cut her in on his share of the profits from Robert Evans' 1984 picture "The Cotton Club." It was claimed that Lanie Greenberger had introduced Roy Radin, who wanted to get into the movie business, to Robert Evans. It was claimed that Roy Radin had offered to find, in return for forty-five per cent of the profits from either one Evans picture ("The Cotton Club") or three Evans pictures ("The Cotton Club," "The Sicilian," and "The Two Jakes," which finished shooting this summer), "Puerto Rican investors" willing to put up either thirty-five or fifty million dollars.

Certain objections leap to the non-prosecutorial mind here—the "Puerto Rican investors" turned out to be one Puerto Rican banker with "connections," the money never actually materialized, Roy Radin therefore had no share of the profits, there were no profits anyway—but seem not to have figured in the state's case. The District Attorney's Office was also hinting, if not quite contending, that Robert Evans himself had been in on the payoff of Radin's killers, and the D.A.'s Office had a protected witness (still another Flynt security man, this one receiving three thousand dollars a month from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department) who had agreed to say in court that one of the defendants, William Mentzer, told him that Lanie Greenberger and Robert Evans had, in the witness's words, "paid for the contract." Given the state's logic, it was hard to know what Robert Evans might have thought to gain by putting out a contract on the goose with the fifty-million-dollar egg, but the deputy district attorney on the case seemed unwilling to let go of this possibility and had, in fact, told reporters that Robert Evans was "one of the people who we have not eliminated as a suspect."

Neither, on the other hand, was Robert Evans one of the people they had arrested, a circumstance suggesting certain lacunae in the case from the major-money point of view, and also from the District Attorney's. Among people outside the criminal-justice system, it was widely, if vaguely, assumed that Robert Evans was somehow "on trial" this summer. "EVANS LINKED FOR FIRST TIME IN COURT TO RADIN'S MURDER," the headlines were telling them, and, in the past-tense obituary mode, "EVANS' SUCCESS CAME EARLY: CAREER EPITOMIZED HOLLYWOOD DREAM."

"Bob always had a premonition that his career would peak before he was fifty and fade down hill," Peter Bart, who had worked under Evans at Paramount, told the Los Angeles *Times*, again in the obituary mode. "He lived by it. He was haunted by it. . . . To those of us who knew him and knew what a good-spirited person he was, it's a terrible sadness." Here was a case described by the *Times* as "focused on the dark side of Hollywood deal making," a case offering an "unsparing look at the film capital's unsavory side," a case everyone was calling just Cotton Club, or even just Cotton, as in " 'COTTON': BIG MOVIE DEAL'S SEQUEL IS MURDER."

Inside the system, the fact that no charge had been brought against the single person on the horizon who had a demonstrable connection with "The Cotton Club" was rendering Cotton Club, *qua* Cotton Club, increasingly problematic. Not only was Robert Evans not "on trial" in Division 47 but what was going on there was not a trial—only a preliminary hearing, intended to determine whether the state had sufficient evidence and cause to prosecute those charged, who did not include Evans. Since 1978, when a California Supreme Court ruling provided criminal defendants the right to a preliminary hearing even after indictment by a grand jury, preliminary hearings have virtually



"Look around, Dennis. Do you see room for a marriage?"

replaced grand juries as a way of indicting felony suspects in California, and are one of the reasons that criminal cases in Los Angeles now tend to go on for years. The preliminary hearing alone in the McMartin child-abuse case lasted eighteen months.

On the days I dropped by Division 47, the judge, a young black woman with a shock of gray in her hair, seemed fretful, inattentive. The lawyers seemed weary. The bailiffs discussed their domestic arrangements on the telephone. When Lanie Greenberger entered the courtroom, not exactly walking but undulating forward on the balls of her feet, in a little half-time prance, no one bothered to look up. The courtroom had been full on the day Robert Evans appeared as the first witness for the prosecution, and took the Fifth, but in the absence of Evans there were only a few reporters and the usual two or three retirees in the courtroom, perhaps a dozen people in all, reduced to interviewing each other and discussing alternative names for the Night Stalker case, which involved a man named Richard Ramirez, who had been accused of thirteen murders and thirty other felonies committed in Los Angeles County during 1984 and 1985. One reporter was calling the Ramirez case, which was then in its sixth month of trial after nine weeks of preliminary hearings and six months of jury selection, Valley Intruder. Another had settled on Serial Killer.

"I still slug it Night Stalker," a third said, and she turned to me. "Let me ask you," she said. "This is how hard up I am. Is there a story in your being here?"

The preliminary hearing in the Radin case had been scheduled for three weeks, and lasted eleven. On July 12th, in Division 47, Judge Patti Jo McKay ruled not only that there was sufficient evidence to bind over Lanie Greenberger, Alex Marti, and William Mentzer for trial but also that the Radin murder might have been committed for financial gain, which meant that the defendants, if convicted, could receive penalties of death. "Mr. Radin was an obstacle to further negotiation involving 'The Cotton Club,' " the prosecuting attorney had argued in conclusion. "The deal could not go through until specific issues such as percentages were worked out. It was at that time that Mrs. Greenberger had the motive to murder Mr. Radin."

I was struck by this as a final argument, because it seemed to suggest an entire case based on the notion that an interest in an entirely hypothetical share of the entirely hypothetical profits from an entirely hypothetical motion picture (at the time Roy Radin was killed, "The Cotton Club" had an advertising poster but no shooting script and no money and no cast and no start date) was money in the bank. All that had stood between Lanie Greenberger and Fat City, as the prosecutor saw it, was boilerplate, a matter of seeing that "percentages were worked out."

The prosecution's certainty on this point puzzled me, and I asked an acquaintance in the picture business if he thought there had ever been money to be made from "The Cotton Club." He seemed not to believe what I was asking. There had been "gross positions," he reminded me—participants with a piece of the gross rather than the net. There had been previous investors. There had already been commitments made on "The Cotton Club," paper out all over town. There had been, above all, a twenty-six-million-dollar budget going in (it eventually cost forty-seven million), and a production team not noted for thrift. "It had to make a hundred to a hundred forty million, depending on how much got stolen, before anybody saw gross," he concluded. "Net on this baby was dreamland. Which could have been figured out, with no loss of life, by a junior agent just out of the William Morris mailroom."

There was always, in the Cotton Club case, a certain dreamland aspect, a looniness that derived in part from the ardent, if misplaced, faith of everyone involved—from the belief in windfalls, in sudden changes of fortune (five movies and four books would change someone's fortune, a piece of "The Cotton Club" someone else's, a high-visibility case the District Attorney's), in killings, both literal and figurative. In fact, this kind of faith is not unusual in Los Angeles. In a city not only conceived largely as a series of real-estate promotions but supported largely by a series of confidence games, a community currently afloat on motion pictures and junk bonds and the B-2 Stealth bomber, the conviction that something can be made out of nothing may be one of the few narratives in which everyone participates. A belief in extreme possibilities colors daily life. Anyone might have woken up one morning and been discovered at Schwab's, or killed at Bob's Big Boy. "Luck is all around you, " a silky voice says on the California State Lottery's Lotto commercials, against a background track of "Dream a Little Dream of Me." "Imagine winning millions—what would you do?"

This shimmer of the possible still lay on Cotton Club this summer, although there seemed, among those dreamers to whom I spoke both in the picture business and in the criminal-justice business, a certain impatience with the way the case was actually playing out. There was nobody in either business, including the detectives on the case, who could hear the words "Cotton Club" and not see a possible score, but the material was resistant. It still lacked a bankable element. There was a definite wish to move on, as they say in the picture business, to screenplay.

The detectives were keeping in touch with motion-picture producers, car phone to car phone, sketching in connecting lines not apparent in the courtroom. "This friend of mine in the sheriff's office laid it out for me three years ago," one producer told me. "The deal was, 'This is all about drugs, Bob Evans is involved, we're going to get him.' And so forth. He wanted me to have the story when and if the movie was done. He called me a week ago, from his car, wanted to know if I was going to move on it."

I heard a number of alternative scenarios. "The story is in this one cop who wouldn't let it go," I was told by a producer. "The story is in the peripheral characters," I was told by a detective I had reached by dialling his car phone. Another producer reported having run into Robert Evans' lawyer, Robert Shapiro, the evening before at Hillcrest Country Club, where the Thomas Hearns–Sugar Ray Leonard fight was being shown closed-circuit from Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. "I asked how our boy was doing," he said, meaning Evans. "Shapiro says he's doing fine. Scot-free, he says. Here's the story. A soft guy from our world, just sitting up there in his sixteen-room house, keeps getting visits from these detectives. Big guys. Real hard guys. Apes. Waiting for him to crack."

Here we had the rough line for several quite different stories, but it would have been hard not to notice that each of them depended for its dramatic thrust on the presence of Robert Evans. I mentioned this one day to Marcia Morrissey, who—as co-counsel with the Miami trial lawyer Edward Shohat, who had defended Carlos Lehder—was representing Lanie Greenberger. "Naturally, they all *want* him in," Marcia Morrissey said.

I asked if she thought the District Attorney's Office would manage to get him in.

Marcia Morrissey rolled her eyes. "That's what it's called, isn't it? I mean, face it. It's called Cotton Club."

THIS is fire season in Los Angeles, and it has been a particularly early and bad one. Most years, it is September or October before the Santa Ana winds start blowing down through the passes, and the relative humidity drops to figures like seven or six or three per cent, and the bougainvillea starts rattling in the driveway, and people start watching the horizon for smoke and tuning in to another of those extreme local possibilities—in this instance, that of imminent devastation. "I've seen fire and I've seen rain," I recall James Taylor singing over and over on the news radio station between updates on the 1978 Mandeville and Kanan fires, both of which started on October 23rd of that year, and which could be seen burning toward each other—systematically wiping out large parts of Malibu and Pacific Palisades—from an upstairs window of my house in Brentwood. It was said then that the Kanan fire was burning on a twenty-mile front and had already jumped the Pacific Coast Highway at Trancas Canyon. The stand in the Mandeville fire, it was said, would be made at Sunset Boulevard. I stood at the window and watched a house on a hill above Sunset implode, its oxygen sucked out by the force of the fire.

Some thirty-four thousand acres of Los Angeles County burned that week in 1978. More than eighty thousand acres had burned in 1968. Close to a hundred and thirty thousand acres had burned in 1970. Seventy-four thousand and some had burned in 1975, sixty-some thousand would burn in 1979. Forty-six thousand would burn in 1980, forty-five thousand in 1982. In the hills behind Malibu, where the moist air off the Pacific makes the brush grow fast, it takes about twelve years before a burn is ready to burn again. Inland, where the manzanita and sumac and chamise that make up the native brush in Southern California grow more slowly (the wild mustard that turns the hills a translucent yellow after rain is not native but exotic, introduced in the nineteen-twenties in an effort to reseed burns), regrowth takes from fifteen to twenty years. Since 1919, when the county began keeping records of its fires, some areas have burned eight times.

In other words, there is nothing unusual about fires in Los Angeles, which is, after all, a desert city with only two distinct seasons: one beginning in January and lasting three or four months, during which storms come in from the northern Pacific and it rains—often an inch every two or three hours, and sometimes, in some places, an inch a minute—and one lasting eight or nine months, during which it burns, or gets ready to burn. What was unusual this year, after two years of drought and a third year of less than average rainfall, was that it was ready to burn while the June fogs still lay on the coastline. On the first of May, months earlier than ever before, the California Department of Forestry declared the start of the fire season and began hiring extra crews. By the last week in June, there had been more than two thousand brush and forest fires in California. Three hundred and twenty of them were burning that week alone.

One morning in early summer, I drove out the San Bernardino Freeway to the headquarters of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, which is responsible not only for coördinating firefighting and reseeding operations throughout the county but for sending, under the California Master Mutual Aid agreement, both equipment and strike teams to fires around the state. Los Angeles County sent strike teams up to fight the hundred-and-sixteen-thousand-acre Wheeler fire in Ventura County in 1985. (The logistics of these big fires are essentially military. Within twelve hours of the first reports on the Wheeler fire, which eventually burned for two weeks and involved three thousand firefighters flown in from around the country, a camp had materialized, equipped with kitchen, sanitation, transportation, and medical facilities, a communications network, a "situation trailer," a "what-if" trailer, for long-range contingency planning, and a "pool coördinator," to get off-duty crews to and from the houses of residents who had offered the use of their swimming pools. "We simply superimposed a city on top of the incident," a camp spokesman said at the time.) Los Angeles County sent strike teams to fight the hundred-thousand-acre Las Pilitas fire in San Luis Obispo County the same year. It sent specially trained people to act as "overhead" on—which is to say, to run—the crews of military personnel brought in from all over the United States to fight the Yellowstone fires in 1988.

On the June morning when I visited the headquarters building, in East Los Angeles, it was already generally agreed that, as one of the men I spoke to put it, "we pretty much know we're going to see some fires this year," with no probable break until January or February. (There is usually some November rain in Los Angeles, often enough to allow crews to gain control of a fire already burning, but only rarely does November rain put enough moisture into the brush to offset the Santa Ana winds that blow until the end of December.) There had been unusually early Santa Ana conditions—a week of temperatures over a hundred. The measurable moisture in the brush, a measurement that the Fire Department calls the "fuel stick," was in some areas already down to single digits. The daily "burn index," which rates the probability of fire on a scale running from zero to two hundred, was that morning showing figures of forty-five for the Los Angeles basin; forty-one for what is called the "high country"; a hundred and twenty-five for the Antelope Valley; and, for the Santa Clarita Valley, a hundred and ninety-two.

Anyone who has ever spent fire season in Los Angeles knows some of its special language—knows, for example, the difference between a fire that has been "controlled" and a fire that has so far been merely "contained" (a contained fire has been surrounded, usually by a trench half as wide as the brush is high, but is still burning out of control within this line and may well jump it), knows the difference between "full" and "partial" control (partial control means, if the wind changes, no control at all), knows about "backfiring" and about "making the stand" and about the difference between a Red Flag Alert (there will probably be a fire today) and a Red Flag Warning (there will probably be a Red Flag Alert within three days).

Still, "burn index" was new to me, and one of the headquarters foresters, Paul Rippens, tried that morning to explain it. "Let's take the Antelope Valley, up around Palmdale, Lancaster," he said. "For today, temperature's going to be ninety-six, humidity's going to be seventeen per cent, wind speed's going to be fifteen miles per hour, and the fuel stick is six, which is getting pretty low."

"Six burns very well," another forester, John Haggenmiller, said. "If the fuel stick's up around twelve, it's pretty hard to get it to burn. That's the range that you have. Anything under six and it's ready to burn very well."

"So you correlate all that, you get an Antelope Valley burn index today of one twenty-five, the adjective for which is 'high,'" Paul Rippens continued. "The adjectives we use are 'low,' 'moderate,' 'high,' 'very high,' and 'extreme.' One twenty-five is 'high.' High probability of fire. We had a hundred-plus-acre fire out there yesterday, about a four-hour fire. Divide the burn index by ten and you get the average flame length. So a burn index of one twenty-five is going to give you a twelve-and-a-half-foot flame length out there. If you've got a good fire burning, flame length has a lot to do with it."

"There's a possibility of a grass fire going through and not doing much damage at all," John Haggenmiller said. "Other cases, where the fuel has

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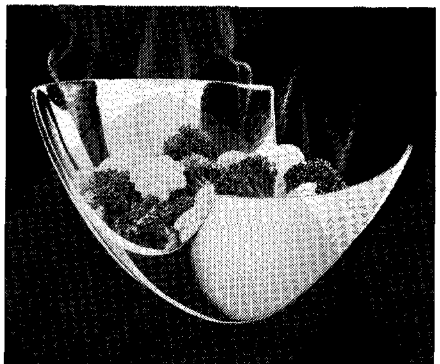

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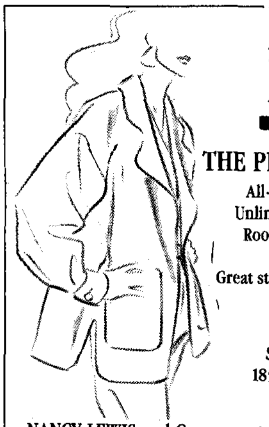

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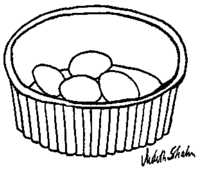
been allowed to build up—say you had a bug kill or a dieback, a lot of decadent fuel—you're going to get a flame length of thirty, forty feet. And it gets up into the crown of a tree and the whole thing goes down. That does a lot of damage."

Among the men I spoke to that morning, there was a certain grudging admiration for what they called "the big hitters"—the major fires, the ones people remember. "I'd say about ninety-five per cent of our fires we're able to hold down to under five acres," I was told by Captain Garry Oversby, who does community relations and education for the Fire Department. "It's the ones when we have extreme Santa Ana conditions, extreme weather—they get started, all we can do is try to hold the thing in check until the weather lays down a little bit for us. Times like that, we revert to what we call a defensive attack. Just basically go right along the edges of that fire until we can get a break. Reach a natural barrier. Or sometimes we make a stand several miles in advance of the fire—construct a line there, and then maybe set a backfire, which will burn back toward the main fire and take out the vegetation, rob the main fire of its fuel."



They spoke of the way a true big hitter "moved," of the way it "pushed," of the way it could "spot," or throw embers and firebrands, a mile ahead of itself, rendering any kind of conventional firebreak useless; of the way a big hitter, once it got moving, would "outrun anybody." "You get the right weather conditions in Malibu, it's almost impossible to stop it," Paul Rippens said. He was talking about the fires that typically start somewhere in the brush off the Ventura Freeway and then burn twenty miles to the sea—the fires that roar over a ridge in a matter of seconds, and make national news because they tend to take out, just before they hit the beach along Malibu, houses that belong to well-known people. Taking out houses is what the men at headquarters mean when they talk about "the urban interface."

"We can dump all our resources out there," Paul Rippens said, and he shrugged.

"You can pick up the flanks and channel it," John Haggenmiller said, "but until the wind stops or you run out of fuel you can't do much else."

"You get into Malibu, you're looking at what we call two-story brush," Paul Rippens said.

"You know the wind," John Haggenmiller said. "You're not going to change that phenomenon."

"You can dump everything you've got on that fire," Paul Rippens said. "It's still going to go to what we call the big blue fuel break."

It occurred to me then that it had been eleven years since the October night when I listened to James Taylor singing "Fire and Rain" between reports on how the Kanan fire had jumped the Pacific Coast Highway to go to the big blue break. On the average twelve-year fire cycle that regulates life in Malibu, the Kanan burn, which happened to include a beach on which my husband and our daughter and I had lived from 1971 until June of 1978, was coming due again. "Beautiful country burn again," I wrote in my notebook—a line from a Robinson Jeffers poem I remember at some point during every fire season—and I got up to leave.

A week or so later, thirty-seven hundred acres burned in the hills west of the Antelope Valley. The flames reached sixty feet. The wind was gusting at forty miles an hour. There were two hundred and fifty firefighters on the ground, and they evacuated fifteen hundred residents, one of whom returned to find her house gone but managed to recover, according to the Los Angeles *Times*, "an undamaged American flag and a porcelain Nativity set handmade by her mother." A week after this Antelope Valley fire, fifteen hundred acres burned in the Puente Hills, above Whittier. The temperatures that day were in the high nineties, and the flames were as high as fifty feet. There were more than nine hundred and seventy firefighters on the line. Two hundred and fifty families were evacuated. They took with them what people always take out of fires—mainly snapshots, mementos small enough to put in the car. "We won't have a stitch of clothing, but at least we'll have these," a woman about to leave the Puente Hills told the *Times* as she packed the snapshots into her car trunk.

People who live with fires think a

great deal about what will happen "when"—as the phrase goes in the nstruction leaflets—"the fire comes." These leaflets, which are stuck up on refrigerator doors all over Los Angeles County, never say "if." When the fire comes, there will be no water pressure. When the fire comes, the roof one watered all the night before will go dry in seconds. Plastic trash cans must be filled with water and wet gunnysacks kept at hand, for smothering the sparks that blow ahead of the fire. The garden hoses must be connected and left where they can be seen. The cars must be placed in the garage, headed out. Whatever one wants most to save must be placed in the cars. The lights must be left on, so that the house can be seen in the smoke. I remember my daughter's Malibu kindergarten sending home on the first day of the fall semester a detailed contingency plan, with alternative sites where, depending on the direction of the wind when the fire came, the children would be taken to wait for their parents. The last-ditch site was the naval air station at Point Mugu, twenty miles up the coast.

"Dry winds and dust, hair full of knots," our Malibu child wrote when asked, in the fourth grade, for an "autumn" poem. "Gardens are dead, animals not fed. . . . People mumble as leaves crumble, fire ashes tumble." There is a definite narrative here, but not a sentimental one, and not one that many people outside Los Angeles seem to hear. In the New York *Times* recently I read a piece in which the way people in Los Angeles "persist" in living with fire was described as "denial." "Denial" is a word from a different narrative altogether. This will be only the second fire season in twenty-five years during which I did not have a house somewhere in Los Angeles County, and the second during which I did not keep the snapshots in a box near the door, ready to go when the fire comes. —JOAN DIDION

•

A single warhead mobile missile, the Midgetman, advocated by leading defense-minded Democrats in Congress such as Sen. Sam Nunn and Rep. Les Aspin, has been embraced, albeit reluctantly. And President Reagan's dream of an all-encompassing antimissile space shield, the "Star Wars" Strategic Defense Initiative, is being scaled down from a theological to a more practical level.—*Austin (Texas) American-Statesman.*

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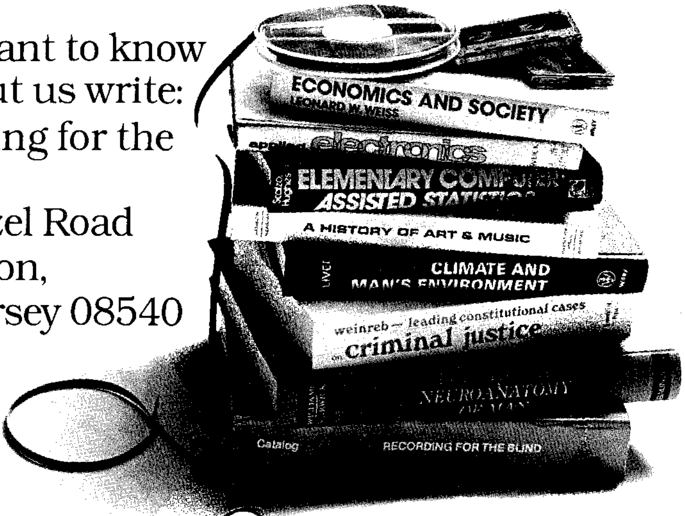
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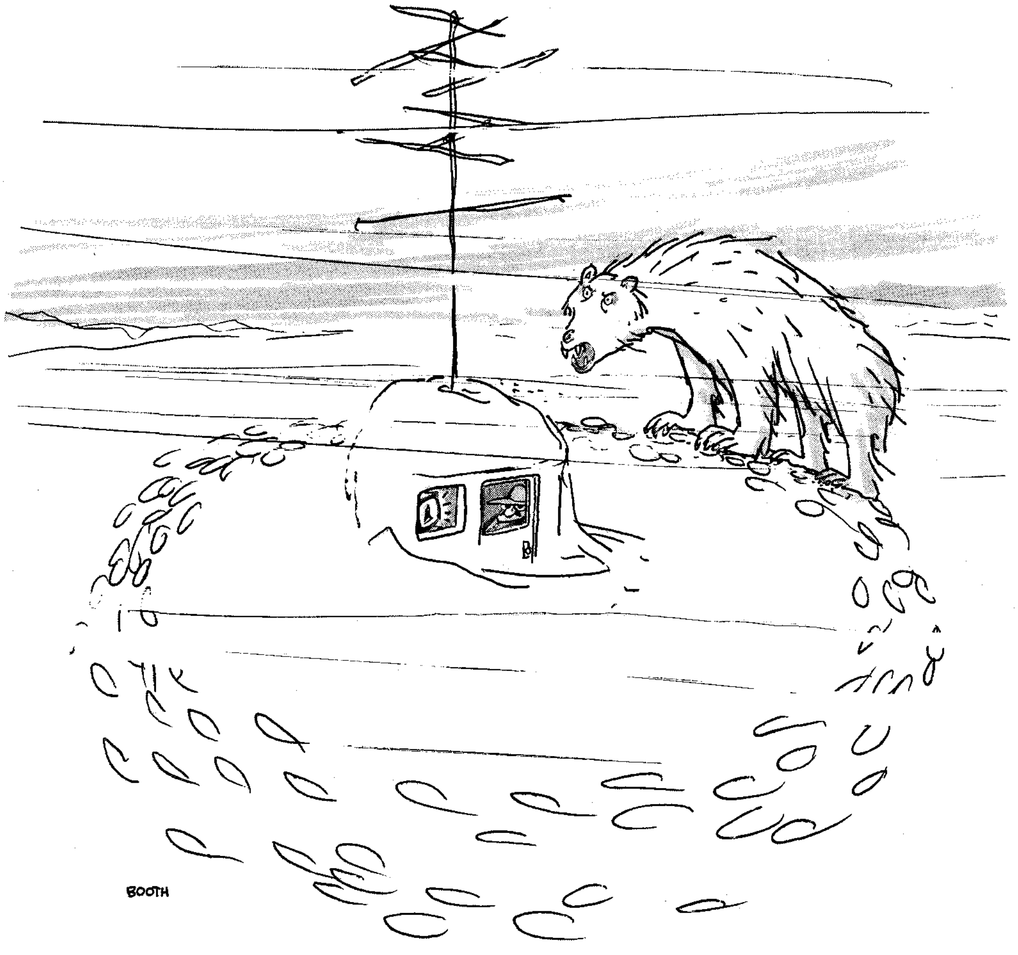
ANNALS OF MEDICINE

THE POKER ROOM

I WENT up to Halifax, the capital and principal city of Nova Scotia, and had a talk with Dr. Thomas J. Marrie, professor of medicine and head of the Division of Infectious Diseases of Dalhousie University School of Medicine there, about a recent case whose resolution gave him perhaps more satisfaction than any of the several other medical perplexities with which he has been confronted. One reason, I gathered, for this good feeling was that he sensed the probable nature of the problem within a matter of hours, and had then only to confirm it. Another was that its confirmation was achieved with equal dispatch.

"Well, yes," Dr. Marrie told me. "I guess that's about right." We were sitting in his office in the Victoria General Hospital complex, a tiny room made smaller by an encirclement of filing cabinets, bookshelves, and a computer and its attendant paraphernalia, but with a big window that opened on a resuscitating expanse of bright-blue summer sky. Dr. Marrie is in his middle forties and a native of Newfoundland, of distant French ancestry. His surname was originally Marie, but, Newfoundland being as generally British as Quebec is French, it was soon Englished into its present somewhat Scottish look. He is a tall man of athletic build, with dark-brown hair and a strong nose, and could probably pass for French. "Of course," he went on, "I had a certain advantage, a rather special advantage: I had a hunch, a very good hunch, that this was something I had seen before."

He gave a little shrug. "We'll go into that later. The outbreak you're interested in occurred a couple of years ago—in March of 1987. I came into the picture on March 15th. One of my colleagues here, a gastroenterologist, called me that morning. He had a patient on referral from a family physician in Digby, about a hundred miles from here. The patient was a black man, thirty-five years old. I'll call him Kenneth Andrews. He'd been sick about a week, since March 8th, with chills and fever, chest pain, and a severe headache. A chest X-ray showed evidence of pneumonia. Well, the pneumonias are a special interest of mine. My colleague thought I might like to take a look at Mr. Andrews. I saw him that afternoon. He was sick, all right. He was sweating profusely, and acting a little strange. I asked him some questions, but he seemed suspicious and evasive. About all I learned was that he had been up here in Halifax on a visit several weeks earlier. I looked at his X-rays, and the evidence of pneumonia was certainly there. There were two rounded opacities that were very suggestive. But he was being treated with appropriate antibiotics, and I had other patients to see and students to teach. I didn't give him a lot more thought.



"*. . . starts Friday at a theatre near you.*"

"Two or three days went by. I happened to be on our rotating consultation service that month. That meant that I saw, as a consultant, most of the patients who were admitted into our hospital complex with what appeared to be an infectious disease. One of these patients brought Kenneth Andrews back to mind. That was, I think, March 18th. This patient was another black man, aged forty-five, whom I'll call Charles Barton. He presented with very much the same symptoms as Andrews. A chest X-ray showed a very similar pneumonia. The only difference was that he wasn't from Digby—wasn't from out of town at all. He lived here in Halifax. Another couple of days went by. And another black man turned up with the same presenting picture, including a notable chest X-ray. I'll call him Peter Curran. Curran lived in Halifax, too. The only difference here was his age. He was in his seventies. Well, Curran coming on top of Barton, and Barton coming on top of Andrews, made me stop and think. I don't mean because they were all black. That doesn't mean anything here in Halifax. We've had a considerable black population—and a pretty well-integrated black population—for well over a hundred years. This was one of the important terminals for the famous Underground Railroad that sneaked so many black people out of the American slave states before and during the American Civil War. Actually, once I stopped to think, I didn't have to do much thinking. All three men had the same suggestive symptoms, particularly the terrible headaches. And the chest X-rays were practically definitive. This was a disease I was only too familiar with. This was an outbreak of Q fever."

Q FEVER is in several respects as peculiar as its name. It manifests, in fact, a consortium of qualities that are shared by few other diseases. It's one of a handful of diseases of international incidence whose existence was first observed in Australia. It was recognized there, in 1935, by E. H. Derrick, a physician associated with the Queensland Health Department, who was investigating an outbreak of prostrating fever among workers in a Brisbane slaughterhouse. Derrick announced his find with a diffidence uncommon in medical science. He *thought* he was seeing a new pathological entity, but he wasn't entirely sure, and he gave expression to this uncertainty by calling it Q (for "query") fever. (It is sometimes erroneously supposed that Derrick, following a more conventional procedure, named his new disease for Queensland, its place of origin.) The originality of his discovery was confirmed by the identification of the causative organism as a hitherto unknown member of the bacterial tribe *Rickettsiae*. A fellow-Australian, the Nobel laureate Sir MacFarlane Burnet, is generally credited with this identification. As it happened, however, Burnet's work was duplicated, independently and coincidentally, by the American bacteriologist Herald Rea Cox, at Nine Mile Creek, in Montana. Q fever was at one time known in the American West as Nine Mile Creek fever. The organism, after some hesitation, was eventually given the name *Coxiella burnetii*, in commemoration of its far-flung elucidation.

The *Rickettsiae* comprise a very small group of microorganisms that are pathogenic to man, but they include the causes of such ferocious afflictions as epidemic typhus, scrub typhus, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Q fever is not a member of this unpleasant company. It is violently abrupt in onset and acutely painful, with a characteristic headache that is often described as all but intolerable, but its course is usually unthreatening (and readily blocked by antibiotics), and though there may be subsequent troublesome complications, it is only rarely fatal. It is, on the other hand, one of the most infectious of all diseases. It has been noted that a single viable organism is enough to cause an infection. The rickettsial fevers in general are transmitted to man by the bite of an infected tick, louse, or mite. Q fever is an exception. Like such notoriously contagious diseases as influenza, measles, mumps, whooping cough, the common cold, and (though now seemingly banished from the earth) smallpox, it is contracted by inhalation. Because it chooses this portal of entry, it most commonly finds its way to the lungs. But even in this it stands distinctively alone. In influenza and its viral kindred, the infecting organism is transmitted by the sneezes, coughs, and nose-blowings of its victims. Q fever is not transmitted from man to man. It is a zoonosis, a disease of animals, principally certain livestock (goats, sheep, and cattle), in which man is only accidentally a victim. *C. burnetii* enters its preferred animal host through the bite of a harboring tick, and then moves to perpetuate itself by way of the excreta of its victim. It is present in the feces, in the urine, in the milk, and, particularly, in the placental materials of parturition. When it thus emerges from its animal victim, it is an organism of long life and rugged constitution. In this form, in which it abides between hosts, it can survive for many months in almost any environment. It is resistant to both moisture and desiccation. It has been found, alive and still pathogenic, in milk kept (for experimental purposes) at room temperature for three years or more. Contaminated manure broadcast in barn or pasture or along the road has been implicated in several considerable Q-fever outbreaks. One of these, involving more than three hundred people, occurred in Switzerland in 1983, and was traced to the frequent passage of sheep down an Alpine valley road. Another out-

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break was reported in Wales in 1981.

The chief victims of Q fever are, as might be supposed, people who live and work with livestock—cattlemen, dairy farmers, sheepherders, sheepshearers, veterinarians, meat packers and processors, and (as in Brisbane in 1935) slaughterhouse workers. People who handle such livestock products as hides and wool are also seriously at risk. Nor is that all. The threat of Q fever is now seen as by no means confined to the countryside or to the products of animal husbandry. The animal reservoir of the disease most probably embraces the whole of the animal kingdom, including, as Dr. Marrie's experience has increasingly shown, some of man's closest companions.

Dr. Marrie touched a switch, and the screen went dark. He removed the last slide from the projector and put it in its wheel-like holder. We were in a kind of viewing room just around the corner from his office, where we had been looking at the chest X-rays of Kenneth Andrews, the first of the Q-fever patients. One roentgenograph had been taken upon his admission, the other a day later. In both, the opacities indicative of Q-fever pneumonitis, dully white against the dark of the lung fields, and about the size of a silver dollar, were clearly apparent even to me.

"I could show you some others," Dr. Marrie said, "but those were the best. Some of the best I ever saw." I followed him out to the hall, and we walked back to his office. "I have to say I was suspicious from almost the first. Certainly from when I saw Andrews' second-day pictures. The Barton and Curran X-rays simply confirmed it. To my satisfaction, at least. But, of course, that wasn't enough. There is a definitive test to determine the presence in the blood of antibodies to the *C. burnetii* organism. Samples were taken from Andrews and the two others, and when the results came through they were positive for Q fever. I might mention that the strain of *C. burnetii* whose antigens we use is homegrown. That is, it's North American, not Australian. It's called the Nine Mile strain. But I'm getting ahead of myself. By the time we had those test results, we had a great deal more to think about. Andrews' case, as I've said, was interesting. I'm interested in the pneumonias and I'm interested in Q fever. But it wasn't until I saw the second case, and then the third, that I got really interested. There was something different going on here. Q fever is not an everyday disease. Three cases so close together constituted, in epidemiological terms, a cluster, and a cluster suggests an outbreak. An outbreak suggests a common source, a link of some sort. I remember talking to Peter Curran. I asked him did he happen to know a man named Charles Barton. He said, yes, he knew him. They were good friends. I said, did he happen to know a man named Kenneth Andrews. Sure, he knew him, too. They all played poker together. He and Charlie Barton played together all the time. Andrews sat in whenever he happened to be in town. Then I asked him where they usually played. Did they play in any particular place? Yeah, sure, they had a regular place. They always played at Tom Dalton's. He had a house over on Munich Street. There was a game going on there every day. Well! So I went back and talked to Kenneth Andrews. When I talked to him before, he had acted rather strange and evasive. He was still evasive, but I eventually got him to talk. What was bothering him, I finally realized, was his fear of getting into trouble: he somehow had the idea that playing poker was against the law here in Halifax. When I reassured him, he opened up, and he had plenty to say. He confirmed everything that Curran had told me. The poker game was practically non-stop. There was a whole crowd that played there pretty regularly. There was only one game, one table. The table seated seven. Those who weren't playing stood around and watched, and waited for one of the players to drop out. One way or another, I pieced together a list of the regulars at the game. There were twenty-eight of them.

"Q fever is not a nationally reportable disease here or in the States. It is in Australia, but not here. That means that I had no obligation to do any more than treat the patients who came into the hospital. It was not a public-health problem. But I was interested. I wanted to know the whole story of the outbreak. And it really was an outbreak by then. I had a new case on my list—Thomas Dalton, the owner of the house on Munich Street and the proprietor of the game. He was also black, and forty-eight years old. That wasn't all. There were other poker players involved. There was a William Evans, forty-five, also black. Then a twenty-eight-year-old white girl. She worked in a bank. Then another black male, forty-nine. Then two more white women, one of them fifty-three and the other thirty-nine. The younger woman was Dalton's ex-wife. Then came another black man I'll call Raymond Kelly. He was sixty years old and arrived at the hospital in a coma, and died a couple of hours later. He had Q fever, but he also had some underlying problems, which were really the cause of his death. Then we had another white woman, aged forty-six, and a white man of twenty-eight. He was the last member of the group to be treated or hospitalized, and he brought the total up to twelve. An interesting group in age, color, and sex. None of the other frequenters of Dalton's place were hospitalized. I didn't see or talk to any of them, but a couple of residents on my service got interested in the outbreak, too, and they checked them out. They all said they were or had been sick, but not sick enough to seek treatment. So the total for the outbreak remained at twelve confirmed. Eleven of them had serologic evidence of *C. burnetii* infection. The twelfth, Raymond Kelly, the man who died, showed evidence of infection at autopsy. Six of the twelve—all male and all black—were seriously ill. One of the women was moderately ill, and three women and the one white man were only mildly infected. All of them, apart from Kelly,

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responded well to tetracycline and fully recovered.

"The incubation period in Q fever seems to range from fourteen to thirty-nine days. That's the interval between infection and the onset of illness. The average is around three weeks. What we wanted to know now was when those twelve people got sick. That would enable us to figure back and reach an approximate time of exposure to whatever was the source of infection. Then we could begin looking for the source. My residents and I started in on that line of questioning. Thomas Dalton, the owner of the Munich Street place, turned out to be the index case. That is, he was the first of the twelve to get sick. His onset was March 5th. The next victim, William Evans, took sick on March 7th. Andrews, the first patient I saw, took sick on March 8th. There were two onsets on the ninth, three on the tenth, two—including the fatal case—on the fourteenth, one the next day, and the last, the one white man, on the sixteenth. As a general rule, the more serious the infection, the shorter the incubation period. The five most serious cases had onsets within a period of only four days. The fatal case had a late onset, but he didn't figure in our calculations. We estimated that the time of exposure was probably in mid-February. We—the residents—went back to the patients again. They checked on the usual sources of infection. None of the eleven had any history of exposure to cattle, sheep, or goats. These were city people. None of them worked in meat packing or such. None of them drank unpasteurized milk. None of them had recently been outside Nova Scotia. These inquiries were simply a matter of routine. We didn't expect to get any positive answers. We knew that the source of infection had to be the one place all the patients had in common—the poker room on Munich Street. I hadn't at this point seen or talked to Tom Dalton. I decided the time was now. He had left the hospital, and I reached him by telephone at his home. He was an easy, cheerful-sounding man. I said I had a couple of questions, and he said go ahead. Our conversation went something like this:

" 'Do you happen to have a cat?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Is it a female?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Did it recently have kittens?'

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" 'Yes. There were three in the litter, but one was born dead.'

" 'When was that?'

" 'I think it was about February 14th.'

" 'Where did it happen?'

" 'She lives in the poker room. That's where she littered.'

" 'Was there a game going on that day?'

" 'There's always a game going on.'

"So I thanked him and hung up."

DR. MARRIE sat back in his chair and smiled. "Now," he said. "Why did I ask those questions? The answer is that I knew the answers, or I was pretty sure I did. And how did that happen? Because I had been there before. The textbook understanding of Q fever has never given cats a role in the epidemiology of the disease. That assumption was challenged here in Nova Scotia a few years ago by a physician named Tom Kosatsky. In the course of investigating a 1982 outbreak of thirteen cases of Q fever in a little fishing village down the coast, near Shelburne, Kosatsky was able to implicate a family cat—a cat that had recently given birth to kittens in the entryway of a house visited on that day or the next by all the victims. Kosatsky had, of course, first eliminated all the usual suspects. He reported his findings in a classic paper published in *The Lancet* in 1984. I've had similar experiences of my own. My first encounter was in 1985, in a village up in northern Nova Scotia, on Cape Breton Island. There were thirty-three cases, confirmed or probable, of Q fever, all of whom lived or worked in a group of adjacent buildings—three stores, a restaurant, and a taxi stand, all with apartments above. The epidemiology was much like that in the Kosatsky outbreak, but there was an interesting difference. One of the families in one of the apartments had a cat, and the cat had recently had kittens—all of them, as it happened, stillborn. The interesting thing was this: all the victims had had contact with the cat, but they hadn't gone to the cat—the cat had gone to them. The cat was in the habit of roaming around the little community, and for three weeks before she gave birth she was bleeding from the vagina. Another experience of mine was a cat-related outbreak of Q fever in a small town over on the Bay of Fundy. The setting was a truck-repair plant that employed thirty-two men and women. Sixteen of them came down with Q fever. Several had to be hospitalized at our center here in Halifax. Their only common point of contact was the plant. The plant occupied a two-story building and some one-story annexes. The repair shop was on the ground floor, and the second floor was divided into an office and a parts department. There was no possible source of infection at the plant. No animals of any kind—not even a cat. But, it finally turned out, there *was* a cat involved. A man who worked in the parts department had one at home. His cat had recently had kittens. We learned that the mother refused to let her kittens nurse. The owner decided to take her place. Every morning, before going off to work he fed the kittens with an eyedropper. Well, there was the source of the outbreak. The kittens' basket was contaminated during the birthing, and that contamination was picked up and absorbed by the man's work clothes. The aerosols generated from his clothing infected him and those of his fellow-workers who had any close contact with him."

Cherchez le chat. "I see what you mean," I said. "And all those cases here in Halifax turned out to have been in the poker room on the day the cat was having her kittens?"

"That's right," Dr. Marrie said. "They were playing or waiting to play or just hanging around watching and drinking beer during most of that day. It was a small room, too—no more than fifteen feet square. And I don't suppose there was much ventilation—this was mid-February. The people who said they had some vague symptoms of illness probably just came and went. There was no question about the cat's being the source of the outbreak. We had a hysterectomy performed on her, and laboratory examination of the uterus demonstrated the presence of *C. burnetii*. I might add that the stillborn kitten was a significant factor in the outbreak. There is good evidence that exposure to a stillborn kitten tends to increase the risk of infection."

I NODDED. That seemed to be that. But no—there was something that bothered me. I wondered how the *cat* had got infected.

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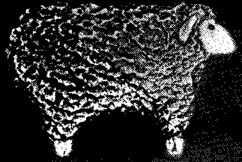

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"That bothered us, too," Dr. Marrie said. "This outbreak was different from the others. They were all in small communities near farms and open country. Cats roam. But Halifax is a city with a population of a hundred and twenty-five thousand or more, and Munich Street is near the center of town. All we have is a reasonable hypothesis. The Dalton cat had no possible contact with farm animals. But cats are mousers, and there are mice just about everywhere. Mice are not notorious carriers of disease vectors, like rats, but they can be a reservoir. They can harbor infected ticks and mites and such. That was established back in 1946, in a big outbreak of rickettsial pox down in New York City. We think the cat caught an infected mouse."

—BERTON ROUECHÉ

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points twisted in a rush
of anger. But, nothing gained
ignoring day, we've pulled
at half the blue and swiped
our damp breath away. Light
from the orange sun—cool
as Vermeer—paints the rims
of tea glasses silver,
makes a spoon's tip quiver.
Four tea bags weep in the dim
of the saucer, like dank,
old leaves. Augurs of day:
your rolled tie, the way
that towel offers its blank
image, waiting for a face.
Tall birch trees shimmer past.
Lit from behind, they mask
great fields that show no trace
of all the blood that made them.
They are plowed silences—
the horizons their fence.
And, before the station's mayhem,
I note this last down:
flowers in a curved vase,
whose small heads are scraps of lace
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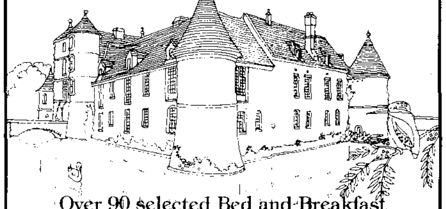

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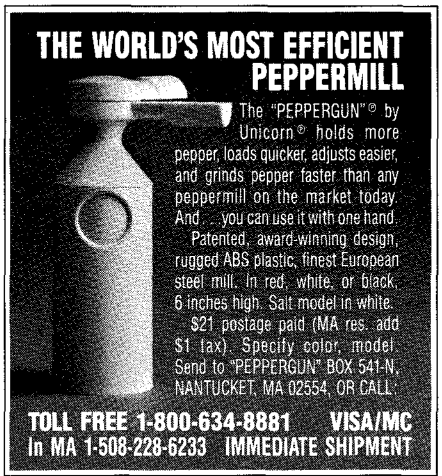

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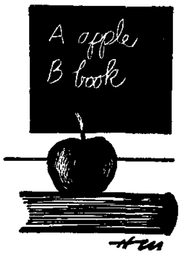
FICTION

NICE WORK (Viking; $18.95) and OUT OF THE SHELTER (Penguin; $7.95, paper), by David Lodge. Maybe because his best novels are a meringue of jokes, it is hard for Americans to take this British writer of profound funniness seriously. Maybe that will change with the publication of the present volumes. The first concerns what few of us can avoid: work. Robyn Penrose has nice work, as a university literature teacher. She will do just about anything to keep her job, and grudgingly "shadows" a factory manager for a ridiculous P.R. project. He is not happy about the idea, but pleasurably expands on learning words like "metonymy" and talking to a woman who, as she often iterates, doesn't need a man to complete her. Robyn, who teaches the Victorian industrial novel as a bad dream of language, is startled at least partly out of her smugness on encountering the real industrial thing. She believes in literature as a kind of game, and the gamelike quality of British plotting is both prominent and twitted here. Like two very brilliant Lodge novels that preceded it ("Changing Places" and "Small World"), "Nice Work" is to some degree "metafiction"—in which "stylistic experiment" is "allowed to disturb the illusion of life." "Out of the Shelter," published in England in 1970 and frankly autobiographical in certain respects, plays it relatively straight, but in the crisp excellence of its prose, the high clarity of character delineation, and the pitting of persuasive points of view against each other in the persons of the characters, it is recognizably by the same author. There is not quite the exhilaration of Lodge's pure metafiction in these two books, but "Nice Work" especially strikes a note both grave and more brightly ringing.



FOR EVERY SIN, by Aharon Appelfeld (Weidenfeld & Nicolson; $15.95). "When the war ended Theo resolved that he would make his way back home alone, in a straight line, without twists or turns." Thus begins Appelfeld's most recent exploration of the death-camp experience of the Second World War. Theo, of course, discovers nothing but twists and turns, mostly in his perceptions and reactions. He moves through hilly countryside empty of all signs of habitation aside from fellow-survivors and ample "supplies"—tins of food, packets of cigarettes, cans of coffee scattered everywhere. He feels revulsion for all reminders of camp life, including the survivors, and though he means to avoid them, he finds himself time and again joining them. The real story here, however, is an allegorical one, about learning to embrace Jewish identity. Theo remembers his mother: she ignored the constraints of reality, travelling and shopping when the family had no money; she listened to church music. Gradually, it is borne in upon the reader that she is meant to represent the forces of assimilation. Before the book is given shape by this didactic design, it is, more interestingly, a novel of disorientation, the kind that might afflict anyone newly out of any sort of prison.

CALL AND RESPONSE, by T. R. Pearson (Linden/Simon & Schuster; $19.95). It is almost impossible to read this novel without hearing echoes of many American narrative voices. The henpecked husbands appeasing dictatorial wives recall Thurber. The singsong epithets ("him with the hair and the moustache and the gold sparkly watch") and repetitions of complete names (Miss Mary Alice Celestine Lefler) have the ring of folk music, from "There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" to "Alice's Restaurant." Above all, Mr. Pearson is a writer of sentences—long, baroque, ornate, and colloquial—in the manner of William Faulkner, though to an effect he might characterize as "purely otherwise entirely." There is no particular plot—some pathetic aging single men court a young tease, a sexy salesman cons the elderly ladies of the town, and the townspeople at various gatherings snipe at one another—but in its most affecting moments the novel reveals in these lowly aspirants to happiness an isolation that is nothing short of tragic.

GENERAL

Claws of the Bear: The History of the Red Army from the Revolution to the Present, by Brian Moynahan (Houghton Mifflin; $24.95). A solid, informative history. Its outlines are familiar: the Red Army was created to fight a civil war, and its officer corps was ravaged in Stalin's purges; nevertheless it defeated the invading German armies. Mr. Moynahan, an editor at the London *Sunday Times*, supplies details new to most of us. He tells us that the Soviet Union has always refused to acknowledge that Western aid provided the margin for its survival after the German attack, and gives us figures that the Soviets have concealed. We know that the Red Army invaded Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan; Mr. Moynahan tells us how the Soviet military controls the satellites' armed forces. And few of us realize how thoroughly the Soviet Union militarizes its young people, with paramilitary groups and military camps for children. Surveying the Soviet military today, Mr. Moynahan judges its officer caste competent and its equipment good; he doubts that social injustice or economic stress would weaken Russia's effectiveness in combat, and he is clearly concerned about the overwhelming power the Russians concentrate against Western Europe.

The Bishop's Boys: A Life of Wilbur and Orville Wright, by Tom Crouch (Norton; $22.50). Milton Wright (1828-1917) was a bishop of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, and a powerful personality, whose younger sons—who never married and never left home—invented the airplane. The bishop's boys were childlike in their emotional dependence, but the author respects their originality and never condescends to their almost mystifying simplicity. Mr. Crouch leaves no doubt that Wilbur (1867-1912) was a genius. A prolonged illness—probably a nervous breakdown—prevented him from attending college, but when he began to think about a flying machine, in 1899, he was able to read the technological literature available in English and isolate the problems that remained to be solved. By 1903, he and his handy brother Orville (1871-1948) had solved them; in December of that year, at Kitty Hawk, they made the first successful flight. Two years later, they constructed "the world's first practical airplane." The author considers this "one of the most extraordinary machines in the history of technology," and his clear exposition of technical matters clarifies the magnitude of the achievement.

Other People's Trades, by Primo Levi, translated from the Italian by Raymond Rosenthal (Summit; $18.95). The "trades" in this gathering of casual essays are sometimes actual occupations but often nonpaying callings—unidle curiosities or passions. The "other people" include naturalists, chessplayers, and Levi himself, as chemist (he retired in 1977), as writer, as a boy. In this book, published in Italy two years before his suicide, in 1987, Levi's experience of Auschwitz is mentioned only in passing. Here the subject is the rest of the world—his Turin and its countryside, his wide reading, his prewar memories—and what might lean toward the heavyhearted is presented, or disguised, as light. "The Need for Fear," for instance, begins with the fear of earwigs. The point of these essays is to keep a close watch on the world as it is; "Let us not yield to the panic of the unknown," he urges in an update on astronomy. In "The Invisible World," Levi, fifteen, and just granted a microscope, watches two parameciums—"crooked like old slippers"—pause beside each other, "as if . . . they had exchanged something and from it drew a mysterious, infinitesimal pleasure."

Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class, by Barbara Ehrenreich (Pantheon; $18.95). A popular—that is, nonacademic—sociological investigation of the reasons that the American professional middle class has moved politically to the right. The book is shrewd, readable, and plainspoken in discussing the conceptions and misconceptions that Americans of differ-

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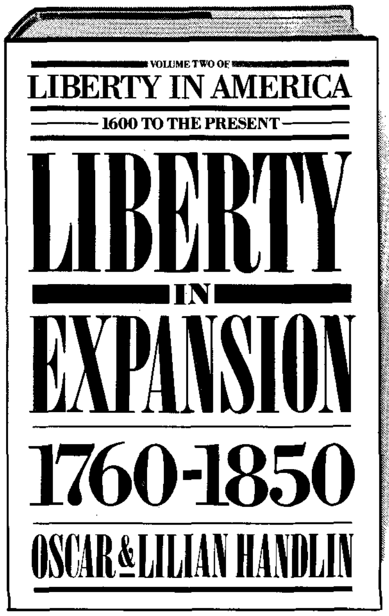

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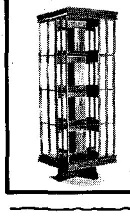

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ent classes hold about each other and the different kinds of stress that a capitalist economy places on the different kinds of people without capital. For example, the children of the professional middle class must start over in every generation. Though the author discusses such intangibles as "status anxiety," she is more inclined to talk of measurable factors, such as the increasing inequality of income distribution. Her book does not pretend to be a last word, but it is a most intelligent beginning.

THE CIVIL WAR NOTEBOOK OF DANIEL CHISHOLM, edited by W. Springer Menge and J. August Shimrak (Orion/Crown; $18.95). In February, 1864, nineteen-year-old Daniel Chisholm of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, enlisted in the Union Army. After the war, he collected letters he and his brother Alex had sent home, and transcribed them, along with the war diary of Sergeant Samuel Clear, a Uniontown man who had served in the same company, in this notebook. It is a footsloggers' view of the last fourteen months of the war, in which forced marches, mud, damp, cold, heat, hardtack, bad equipment, the tedium of picket duty, and sudden, savage fighting are the realities. The three writers had their individual ways with spelling and syntax, but they wrote freely, sometimes vividly, and without airs. We see them marching through a Southern town and taunting the "Rebel young ladies" who "peeped at us through the palings and windows" (and sang back, "We have a Lee that will attend to you"); hiking off after breakfast on a cold December morning to witness the hanging of three deserters. Sergeant Clear, the day after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, records that the Union Army's rations "were given to the Johnnies," who were starving, and he reflects that, after all, "we are all Americans of the Old School of our Fathers."

AT HOME AND ABROAD, by V. S. Pritchett (North Point; $19.95). This book reminds us that Pritchett's writing about travel is the equal of his fiction and his literary criticism. The essays collected here, all but one of them first printed in *Holiday* in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, take in a good part of the Western world, from the Mediterranean countries of Europe to the coasts of North and South America. Changes in those places since Pritchett visited them—Salazar no longer dictates to the Portuguese people, nor Franco to the Spanish; Uruguay is no longer an ideal "working democracy"—have made some of his factual observations obsolete. Nevertheless, these essays, insightful, evocative, and sensitive to the peoples among whom the author sojourned, stand up well. They will delight anyone with a feeling for clear English prose, like this description of the Bolivian *altiplano:* "The roads vanish into wilderness tracks of whitened rocks that have been withered like ghosts, for even rocks can die and turn into whorled specters in their mindless cemeteries. At this height much of what you call yourself dies out with a snap, like that; but what survives becomes intensed and overexcited."

NOTE: "The Control of Nature," by John McPhee, has been published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux ($17.95). All the contents originally appeared in *The New Yorker.*

MYSTERY AND CRIME

LONELY HEARTS, by John Harvey (Holt; $16.95). Charlie Resnick, the centerpiece of this first novel, is a detective inspector in a small English city, and everything that a successful fictional detective should be these days. That is to say, he is both conspicuously different from his fictional peers and yet of exactly the same mold. His parents were Polish, he is a devotee of American jazz and a cat lover whose pets are named Dizzy, Miles, Bud, and Pepper, but—back in the mold—he is divorced, careless of his appearance, broody, and a little bit reserved, and he has a tendency to overeat and overdrink. Mr. Harvey's introductory thriller is a success. He gives us a good mystery—a strangled and sexually abused woman whose probable murderer is in custody when a second, similar murder occurs—and a raft of well-developed characters of all kinds and classes, and he has a quick and resolute way with story and setting.

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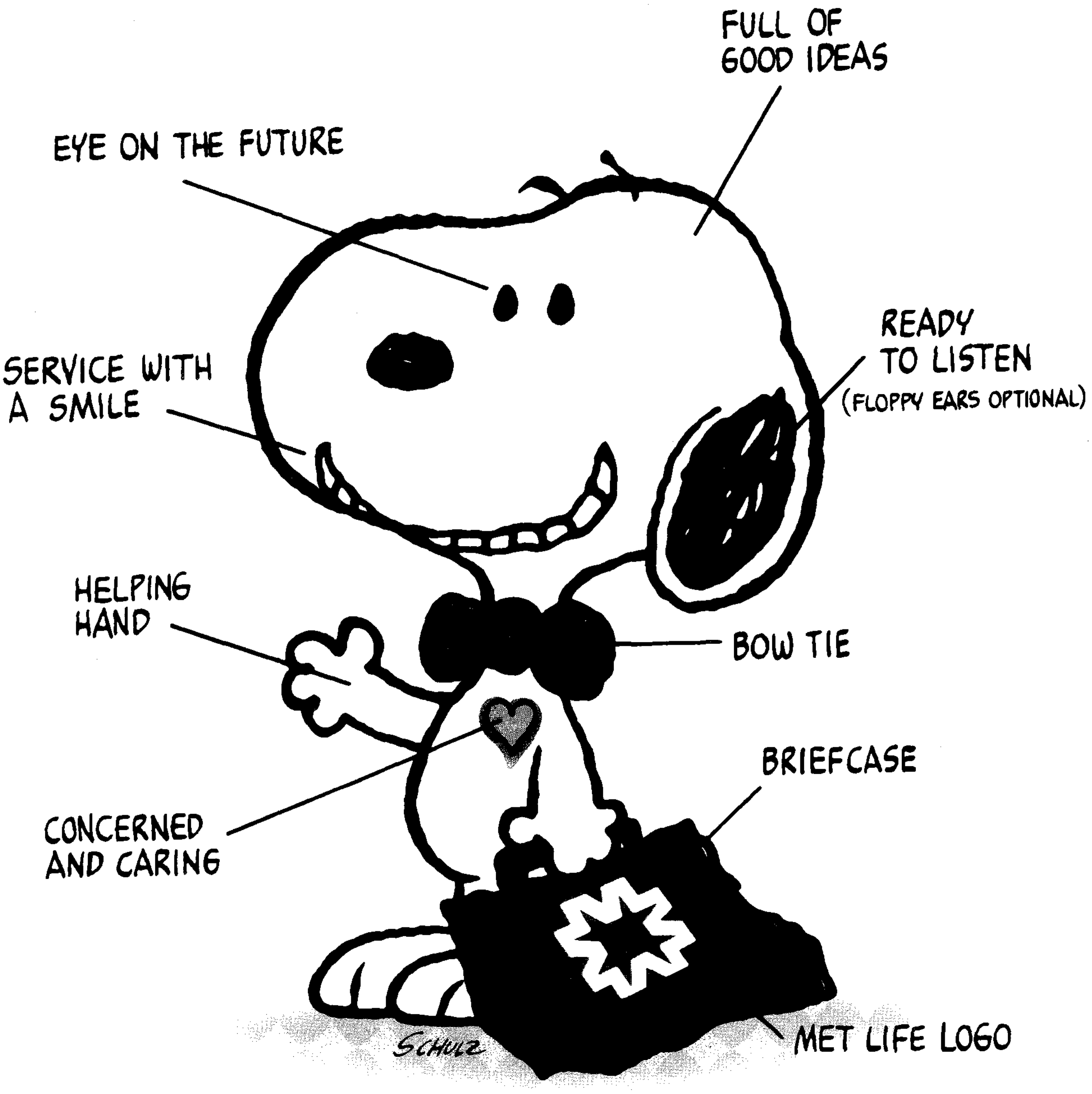
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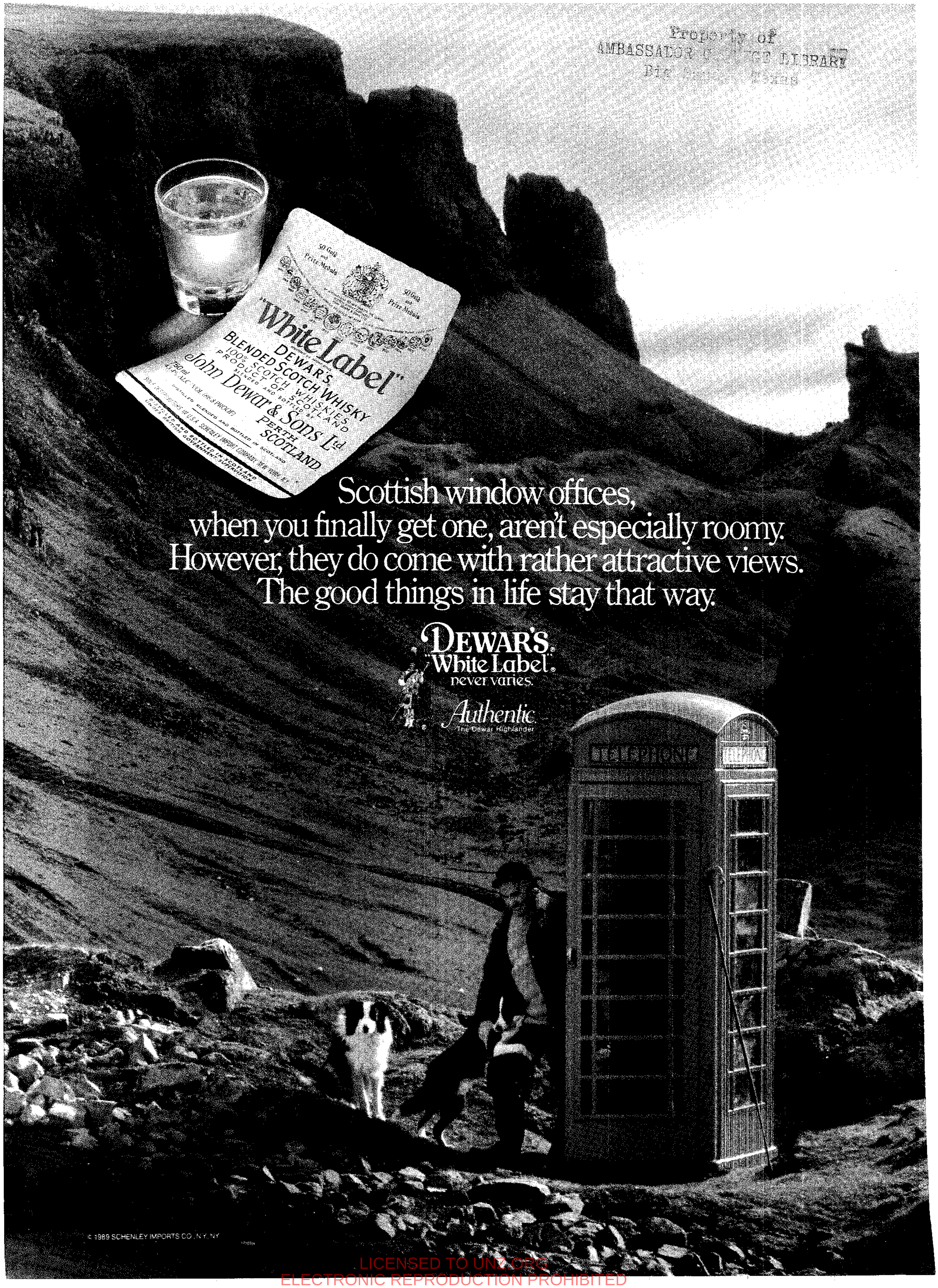

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